

Revelations of The Unseen

A COLLECTION OF SEVENTY-EIGHT DISCOURSES



Futūh al-Ghaib

SHAIKH 'ABD AL-QĀDIR AL-JILĀNĪ

TRANSLATED FROM THE ARABIC BY MUHTAR HOLLAND

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"And with Him are the keys of the unseen." Qur'an (6:59)

Cover calligraphy: Rohana Filippi

Using watercolor and wax to combine the beauty of Arabic script with the Qur'anic message on paper, Italian artist Rohana Filippi has developed her own artistic style through personal research and inner inspiration. Her art is entirely devoted to "expressing Allāh's presence everywhere," and as such her paintings offer an opportunity to enjoy a harmonious, universal experience that transcends all cultural and religious barriers. Ms. Filippi, who currently resides in Colombia, has lived and worked in England, Mexico, and the United States.

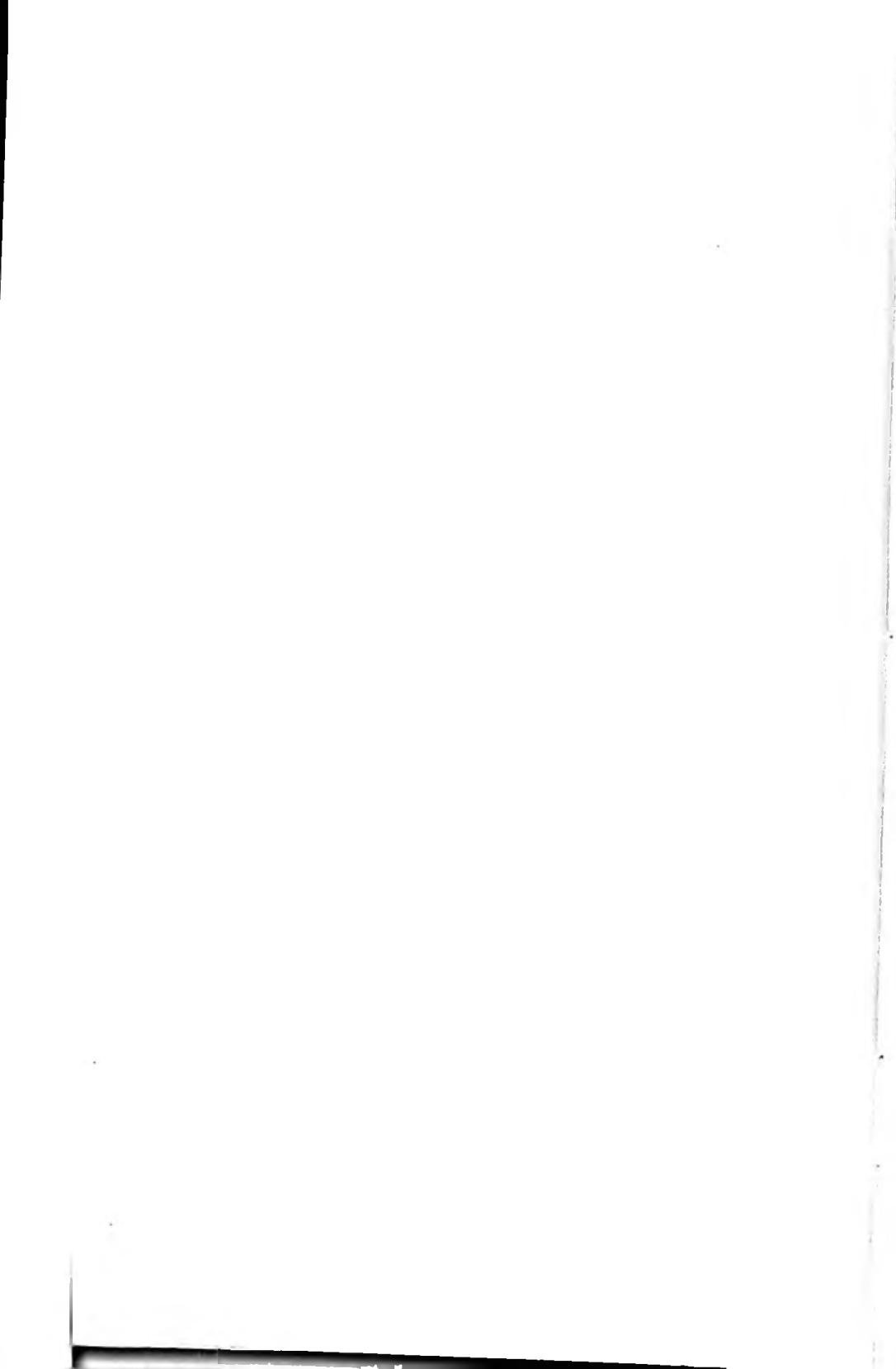
Publisher's Preface

The words of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī can undoubtedly be considered among the most precious treasures of Islām. Indeed, Al-Baz Publishing was founded with the intention of providing fine English translations of his works for the benefit of English-speaking Muslims everywhere, in the spirit of wishing to share the benefit and blessing we have received ourselves at his hand.

I first became interested in Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir in learning from my own spiritual guide and benefactor Bapak Muhammad Sumohadiwidjojo, founder of the Subud brotherhood (may Allāh be well pleased with him), that Allāh had bestowed on the Shaikh the same opening and contact that Bapak himself received from Allāh, and which he has passed on to us.

Anyone familiar with the *latihan kejiwaan* of Subud will understand that to be so honored by Almighty God is an unusual occurrence in the history of mankind, such grace usually being bestowed on very few of His creatures. My interest thus being aroused, I sought out the surviving manuscripts from their various repositories around the world, and began the task of having them translated. From the very first reading it was apparent to me that what Bapak had said about the Shaikh was true.

O reader! This endeavor is for you! If you find benefit in the reading of these talks, pray that Allāh bless the Shaikh, and pray for us too, that our offering may find acceptance in His sight!



Acknowledgments

All praise is due to Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful!

We bear witness that there is no god except Allāh, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allāh!

Our Lord, thank You for giving us this wholesome task!



Grateful thanks to Muhtar Holland for devoting years of his life to translating these works; may Allāh bless him! Thanks too, to the many who have helped make this publication possible, among them the following:

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2000-2001 ANNUAL REPORT

Concerning the Author, Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī

A brief introduction by the translator

Many words *about* Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (may Allāh be well pleased with him) have been written in English and other Western European languages, and have been published in books, encyclopedias and journals. Most of the Shaikh's own words, however, have remained accessible only to those who can read his writings, and his recorded utterances, in the original Arabic or in translations into other Oriental languages, such as Persian and Urdu. As one who has been blessed with sufficient skill—and with the practical opportunity—to make his humble contribution toward correcting this imbalance, I feel obliged to assure the reader that I intend to concentrate on further tasks of translation, rather than expatiating at great length on my personal view of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir, his life, his works, and his spiritual influence through the ages. The following brief introduction may nevertheless serve a useful purpose, especially for readers who lack ready access to publications containing relevant background material.

The Author's Names and Titles

A rich store of information about the author of *Revelations of the Unseen* is conveniently available, to those familiar with the religious and spiritual tradition of Islām, in his names, his surnames, and the many titles conferred upon him by his devoted followers. It is not unusual for these to take up several lines in an Arabic manuscript, but let us start with the short form of the author's name as it appears on the cover and title page of this book: *Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī*.

Shaikh: A term applied throughout the Islamic world to respected persons of recognized seniority in learning, experience and wis-

dom. Its basic meaning in Arabic is “an elder; a man over fifty years of age.” (The spellings *Sheikh* and *Shaykh* may also be encountered in English-language publications.)

'Abd al-Qādir: This is the author's personal name, meaning “Servant [or Slave] of the All-Powerful.” (The form *'Abdul Qādir*, which the reader may come across elsewhere, is simply an alternative transliteration of the Arabic spelling.) It has always been a common practice, in the Muslim community, to give a male child a name in which *'Abd* is prefixed to one of the Names of Allāh.

al-Jilānī: A surname ending in *-i* will often indicate the bearer's place of birth. Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir was born in the Iranian district of Gilān, south of the Caspian Sea, in A.H. 470/1077–8 C.E. (In some texts, the Persian spelling *Gilānī* is used instead of the arabicized form *al-Jilānī*. The abbreviated form *al-Jīlī*, which may also be encountered, should not be confused with the surname of the venerable 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, author of the celebrated work *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, who came from Jil in the district of Baghdād.)

Let us now consider a slightly longer version of the Shaikh's name, as it occurs near the beginning of another collection of his discourses, entitled *Al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī* [The Sublime Revelation]: *Sayyidunā 'sh-Shaikh Muhyi'd-Dīn Abū Muhammād 'Abd al-Qādir (Rādiya'llāhu 'anh)*.

Sayyidunā 'sh-Shaikh: “Our Master, the Shaikh.” A writer who regards himself as a Qādirī, a devoted follower of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir, will generally refer to the latter as *Sayyidunā* [our Master], or *Sayyidi* [my Master].

Muhyi'd-Dīn: “Reviver of the Religion.” It is widely acknowledged by historians, non-Muslim as well as Muslim, that Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir displayed great courage in reaffirming the traditional teachings of Islām, in an era when sectarianism was rife, and when materialistic and rationalistic tendencies were predominant in all

sections of society. In matters of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and theology (*kalām*), he adhered quite strictly to the highly “orthodox” school of Imām Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal.

Abū Muḥammad: “Father of Muḥammad.” In the Arabic system of nomenclature, a man’s surnames usually include the name of his first-born son, with the prefix *Abū* [Father of—]. According to at least one account of his life,¹ Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir remained unmarried until his fifty-first year. He then took four wives, who bore him twenty-seven sons and twenty-two daughters.

Radiya’llāhu ‘anh: “May Allāh be well pleased with him!” This benediction is the one customarily pronounced—and spelled out in writing—after mentioning the name of a Companion of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace). The preference for this particular invocation is yet another mark of the extraordinary status held by Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir in the eyes of his devoted followers.

Finally, we must note some important elements contained within this even longer version: *al-Ghawth al-A’zam Sultān al-Awliyā’ Sayyidunā ‘sh-Shaikh Muhyi’d-Dīn ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī al-Hasanī al-Husainī (Radiya’llāhu ‘anh).*

al-Ghawth al-A’zam: “The Supreme Helper” (or, “The Mightiest Succor”). *Ghawth* is an Arabic word meaning: 1. A cry for aid or succor. 2. Aid, help, succor; deliverance from adversity. 3. The chief of the Saints, who is empowered by Allāh to bring succor to suffering humanity, in response to His creatures’ cry for help in times of extreme adversity.

Sultān al-Awliyā’: “The Sultan of the Saints.” This reinforces the preceding title, emphasizing the supremacy of the *Ghawth* above all other orders of sanctity.

al-Hasanī al-Husainī: “The descendant of both al-Hasan and al-Husain, the grandsons of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him

peace)." To quote the Turkish author, Shaikh Muzaffer Ozak Efendi (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him): "The lineage of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir is known as the Chain of Gold, since both his parents were descendants of the Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace). His noble father, 'Abdullāh, traced his descent by way of Imām Ḥasan, while his revered mother, Umm al-Khair, traced hers through Imām Ḥusain."

As for the many other surnames, titles and honorific appellations that have been conferred upon Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, it may suffice at this point to mention *al-Bāz al-Ashhab*[The Gray Falcon].

The Author's Life in Baghdād

Through the mists of legend surrounding the life of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, it is possible to discern the outlines of the following biographical sketch:

In A.H. 488, at the age of eighteen, he left his native province to become a student in the great capital city of Baghdād, the hub of political, commercial and cultural activity, and the center of religious learning in the world of Islām. After studying traditional sciences under such teachers as the prominent Ḥanbali jurist (*faqīh*), Abū Sa'd 'Alī al-Mukharrimī, he encountered a more spiritually oriented instructor in the saintly person of Abu'l-Khair Ḥammād ad-Dabbās. Then, instead of embarking on his own professorial career, he abandoned the city and spent twenty-five years as a wanderer in the desert regions of 'Irāq. He was over fifty years old by the time he returned to Baghdād, in A.H. 521/1127 C.E., and began to preach in public. His hearers were profoundly affected by the style and content of his lectures, and his reputation grew and spread through all sections of society. He moved into the school (*madrasa*) belonging to his old teacher al-Mukharrimī, but the premises eventually proved inadequate. In A.H. 528, pious donations were applied to the construction of a residence and guesthouse (*ribāṭ*),

capable of housing the Shaikh and his large family, as well as providing accommodation for his pupils and space for those who came from far and wide to attend his regular sessions (*majālis*). He lived to a ripe old age, and continued his work until his very last breath, as we know from the accounts of his final moments recorded in the Addendum to *Revelations of the Unseen*.²

In the words of Shaikh Muzaffer Ozak Efendi: "The venerable 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī passed on to the Realm of Divine Beauty in A.H. 561/1166 C.E., and his blessed mausoleum in Baghdađ is still a place of pious visitation. He is noted for his extraordinary spiritual experiences and exploits, as well as his memorable sayings and wise teachings. It is rightly said of him that 'he was born in love, grew in perfection, and met his Lord in the perfection of love.' May the All-Glorious Lord bring us in contact with his lofty spiritual influence!"

The Author's Literary Works

Al-Ghunya li-ṭālibī ṭarīq al-ḥaqq [Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of Truth]. Arabic text published in two parts by Dār al-Albāb, Damascus, n.d., 192 pp. + 200 pp. English translation commissioned for eventual publication by Al-Bāz Publishing, Inc.

In his own introductory remarks, Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir explains how he came to compose this monumental work: "One of my friends had been pressing me, urging me in very emphatic terms to compose this book, because of his excellent appreciation of what is right and proper... I came to recognize the sincerity of his wish to acquire real knowledge of modes of behavior consistent with the sacred law..., real knowledge of the Maker (Almighty and Glorious is He)..., instruction in the Qur'ān and Prophetic utterances, and real knowledge of the morals and ethics of the righteous. All of these subjects we shall review in the course of the book, so that it may serve as a helper to him in following the path of Allāh (Almighty

and Glorious is He), in carrying out His commandments and observing His prohibitions."

Al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī [The Sublime Revelation]. A collection of sixty-two discourses delivered by Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir in the years A.H. 545–546/1150–1152 C.E. Although it contains fewer separate discourses, this work is well over twice the length of *Revelations of the Unseen*. Arabic text published by Dār al-Albāb, Damascus, n.d. Arabic text with Urdu translation: Madīna Publishing Co., Karachi, 1989. Complete English translation prepared for publication by Al-Bāz Publishing, Inc.

Even a non-Muslim scholar like D.S. Margoliouth was so favorably impressed by the content and style of *Al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī* that he wrote:³ "The sermons included in [this work] are some of the very best in Muslim literature: the spirit which they breathe is one of charity and philanthropy: the preacher would like to 'close the gates of Hell and open those of Paradise to all mankind.' He employs Sūfi technicalities very rarely, and none that would occasion the ordinary reader much difficulty..."

Malfūzāt [Utterances]. A loosely organized compilation of talks and sayings by Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir, almost equal in total length to *Revelations of the Unseen*. Frequently treated as a kind of appendix or supplement to manuscript and printed versions of *Al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī*. Complete English translation prepared for publication by Al-Bāz Publishing, Inc.

Futūḥ al-Ghaib [Revelations of the Unseen]. The Arabic text, edited by Muḥammad Sālim al-Bawwāb, has been published by Dār al-Albāb, Damascus, 1986. (On translations published in Western languages, please see concluding section of this Introduction).

Jalā' al-Khāṭir [The Removal of Care] or *Jalā' al-Khawāṭir* [The Removal of Cares]. A collection of forty-five discourses by Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir. Arabic text with Urdu translation, under title *Jalā'*

al-Khawāṭir, published by Maktaba Nabawiyya, Lahore, n.d.

Other works attributed to Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir include short treatises on some of the Divine Names; litanies /awrād/ *ahzāb*; prayers and supplications /da'awāt / *munājāt*; mystical poems /qasā'id/.

Previous translations of *Futūh al-Ghaib*

With gratitude and respect, I wish to conclude this brief introduction by acknowledging the work of my predecessors, whose earlier translations of *Futūh al-Ghaib* [Revelations of the Unseen] have been most helpful to me while preparing the version now offered to the reader.

W. Braune published his German translation, *Die Futūh al-Gaib des 'Abd al-Qādir*, in Berlin in the fateful year of 1933. My sense of awe grows more intense, each time I reflect on the juxtaposition of that title with that place and date. Almost eight hundred years had then elapsed, since Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir uttered his enlightening and spiritually liberating words in the Arabic tongue. Providence enabled him to acquire a German voice at the very moment when falsehood and tyranny were abusing the German language to proclaim their triumph, as Hitler became Chancellor in Berlin.

To the best of my knowledge, there has been only one other complete translation into any Western language, namely the English version by M. Aftab-ud-Din Ahmad, entitled *Futuh Al-Ghaib [The Revelations of the Unseen]* and published in Lahore, Pakistan, by Sh. Muhammad Ashraf. The original date of publication is not mentioned in the copy at my disposal, which is a reprint issued in 1986, but I believe that the book first appeared several decades ago.

As for my own translation, printed within the covers of the book that is now in the reader's hands, it may well be regarded as a tribute to Maulvi Aftab-ud-Din, whose work was avidly read—and re-read, and re-read—by Ruslan Moore, the person who would become the

founder of Al-Bāz Publishing, Inc. The fellowship between Ruslan and myself is rooted in our experience of the *latihan kejiwaan* of Subud, an experience shared over many long years, and that fellowship has been further enriched since we became brothers in Islām. I agreed with his perception of the need for a new translation, to complement rather than totally supersede the work of the venerable Aftab-ud-Din, for the benefit of readers who are unfamiliar with sentence structures and turns of phrase peculiar to the Anglo-Indian variety of the English language.

May Allāh forgive our mistakes and failings, and may He bestow His blessings upon all connected with our project—especially our gracious readers! Āmīn.

Muhtar Holland

¹ See S.A. Salik. *The Saint of Jilan*. Lahore: Ashraf (publ.), 1974, pp. 80-84.

² See p. 188.

³ In his article "Abd al-Kādir" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (also printed in *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1961).

Author's Genealogy

According to Shaikh 'Abd al-Razzāq, noble son of the author: "These are the words of my father (may Allāh—Exalted is He—bestow His approval upon him!), Supporter of the Imāms, Master of the Orders, Abū Muḥammad Muḥyi'i d-dīn 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī al-Ḥasanī al-Ḥusainī al-Ṣiddīqī, son of Abū Ṣalih Mūsā Jangī Dost, son of Imām 'Abdu'l-lāh, son of Imām Yaḥyā the Ascetic, son of Imām Muḥammad, son of Imām Dāwūd, son of Imām Mūsā, son of Imām 'Abdu'l-lāh, son of Imām Mūsā al-Jawn, son of Imām 'Abdu'l-lāh al-Mahdī, son of Imām al-Ḥasan the Junior, son of the Imām, the Commander of the Believers, our Master al-Ḥasan the Grandson [of the Prophet], son of the valiant Imām, heroic Lion of Allāh, hero's proud son, Commander of the Believers, our Master 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may Allāh ennoble his countenance, and be well pleased with him and with them all. Āmīn.)"

Author's Prologue

Praise be to Allāh, Lord of All the Worlds, first and last, outwardly and inwardly, frequent as the tally of His creatures, far-reaching as His words and weighty as His throne, fit for His own approval, frequent as the count of all things paired and single, of all things "fresh and dry in a lucid Book" *, and of all that our Lord has created, fashioned and formed—creating without model or mold, always and forever in purity and blessedness. Praise be to Him Who creates and then disposes, Who measures and then guides, Who causes death and brings to life, Who makes one laugh and makes one cry, Who draws one near and brings one close, Who shows mercy and abases, Who gives to eat and gives to drink, Who gives good fortune and misfortune, Who withholds and bestows, by Whose command the seven strong heavens stand firm and the mountains and hills stay fixed and the level earth lies still. Of His mercy none need despair; from His cunning design and jealous supervision no one is exempt, and there is no escape from His decrees, His action, His command; none can evade His service, and none is bereft of His grace. Therefore to Him all praise is due for what He has given, and to Him all thanks are due for what He has set aside.

Then blessings upon His Chosen Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace!)—to follow whose message is to be guided aright, while to turn aside therefrom is to go astray and perish—the truthful Prophet known for the truth of his word, abstainer from the pleasures of this world, seeker yearning for the Friend on high, chosen from all His creation, selected from all His creatures, with whose advent came the truth, at whose appearance falsehood vanished away, and by whose light the earth became illumined.

Then upon him be further blessings copious, and benedictions good and pure and blessed; also upon the good members of his family, his companions, and their successors in active goodness,

* Allusion to Qur'ān (6:59)

those most excellent for their Lord in deed, most upright for Him in speech, and most correct in following His path and way.

Then let our entreaty, supplication and recourse be to our Lord, our Author and Creator, our Provider Who gives us food and drink, our Benefactor and Preserver, our Guardian and the One Who gives us life, our Protector and Defender against everything that brings us grief and pain—and all this through His mercy and His tender care, His gracious favor of perpetual safekeeping in all we say and do, in private and in public, in the open and in secret, in hardship and in ease, in comfort and in misery and woe. Surely He is Absolute Doer of whatever He wishes, Ordainer of whatever He wills, Knower of what is concealed, Aware of all states and conditions, be they lapses or acts of obedience and intimate worship, Hearer of all sounds and voices, Acceptor of all prayers from anyone He wills, without dispute or hesitation.

To this let me add: How many and bountiful are the favors Allāh bestows on me, at all hours of night and day, at every moment and at every instant, and under all conditions. As Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He!) has said: "And if you count the favor of Allāh, you will never add it up" (16:18). The Exalted One also tells us: "And any benefit you may enjoy, it is from Allāh" (16:53). No hands have I, therefore, and neither heart nor tongue, for dealing with such figures and their computation. Counting cannot reach their tally, nor mental faculties their sum; the heart finds them incalculable, and they defy expression by the tongue. So now, from among such statements as the tongue is enabled to utter, the power of speech to express, the fingers to record, and the eloquence of language to explain, here are some words that arose and emerged for me as "Revelations of the Unseen." They alighted within my being and occupied its inner space, till the energy of the experience brought them forth and made them outwardly apparent. Then the kindness of the Benefactor and the mercy of the Lord of mankind took care of their publication in the proper literary format, for the benefit of students and seekers of the truth.



Fig. 1. Effect of dilution on the viscosity of polyisobutylene at 30°C.

and the viscosity of the polymer solution is plotted against concentration (Fig. 1).

It is evident from Figure 1 that the viscosity of the polymer solution is not a linear function of concentration. The viscosity of the polymer solution is maximum at a concentration of about 4 g./100 ml.

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First Discourse

On the essential tasks of every true believer

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Three things inevitably demand the attention of every believer under all circumstances: A commandment to be obeyed, a prohibition to be respected, and a divine decree to be accepted with good grace. In even the most trivial situation, at least one of the three is bound to apply. The believer must therefore keep his mind and feelings focused upon them, talk to himself about them, and practice the physical self-discipline they require of him at all times.

Second Discourse

On sharing good advice

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Follow [the example of the Prophet], without concocting innovations: obey, do not turn renegade; affirm the Unity of God, ascribing no partner to Him; assert the immaculate nature of His Truth, entertaining no doubts; profess your belief, without complaining; endure with patience, not getting upset; hold your ground, not turning to run; make your needs known, without venting frustration; wait and watch, never yielding to despair; behave like brothers, not like enemies; unite in obedience, instead of going your separate ways; feel love for one another, not mutual hate; make yourselves pure, free from the blemish and stain of sin, adorning yourselves with obedient service to your Lord; from your Master's door do not walk away, nor refrain from devotion to Him; in repentance do not delay, and never weary of apologies to your Creator at any hour of night or time of day. Then perhaps mercy will be yours and happiness; far from the fire of Hell removed, you may be allowed the joys of Paradise, brought into the presence of Allāh, immersed in bliss, consorting with the virgins in the Abode of Peace, and in that state eternally abiding; fine horses you may ride, and take delight in nymphs with eyes like the gazelle, in every kind of perfume, and in the melodies of songstresses, along with all those other blessings; and be exalted in the company of the Prophets (*al-anbiyā*), the champions of truth (*as-siddiqūn*), the martyrs (*ash-shuhādā*) and the righteous (*as-sālibūn*).

Third Discourse

On being tried and tested

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

When the servant [of the Lord] is tested with a trial, his first impulse is to cope with it in and by himself. If his own efforts get him nowhere he looks for help from other human beings, such as people in power, important officials, men of influence and means, or medical experts where diseases and physical ailments are involved. If he still obtains no relief, he then resorts to his Lord through prayers of supplication, humble entreaty and offering of praise.

As long as he finds it possible to manage on his own, he will not turn to other people, and while human help is available he will not turn to the Creator.

[Having finally applied to Him], only to find no help forthcoming from the Creator, he throws himself down in His presence, incessantly begging, pleading, entreating, offering praise and submitting his needs in fear and hope. But the Creator (Almighty and Glorious is He) now renders him incapable of supplication, and ignores him until he has reached the end of his tether. Only then does he experience the effect of the Lord's decree and the action of His work, and so this servant passes beyond material needs and behavior, to survive as spirit alone.

Since he now sees nothing but the Truth *[al-Haqq]* in action, he becomes, of necessity, a totally convinced believer in the divine Unity *[muwabbid]*, affirming that in reality there is no agent but Allāh, no dynamic or static force apart from Allāh, and no good or evil, no loss or gain, no giving or withholding, no opening or closing, no death or life, no honor or disgrace except in the hand of Allāh. His status comes to resemble that of a suckling babe in its nurse's arms, of a corpse in the hands of a washer of the dead, or of

a ball on the receiving end of a polo-player's mallet—rolled and spun and knocked around, though inert in itself and imparting no motion to other bodies.

Gone forth from his own self, out into his Master's work, he now sees nothing but that Master and His work, and neither hears nor comprehends from any other source. If he perceives at all, if he does hear and learn, His speech is what he listens to, and His knowledge is what he comes to know. His favor he enjoys, through His nearness he prospers, through His proximity he is graced and honored, by His promise he is pleased and reassured. With Him he feels at peace, and in His discourse he takes delight, while from all others he recoils and shrinks away. In remembrance of Him he finds refuge and support. In Him, the Almighty and Glorious, he puts his faith and in Him he places his trust. By the light of His awareness he is guided, as he wraps and clothes himself therein. Strange marvels of His science he discovers, and of the secrets of His power he is apprised. To Him he listens and from Him he learns, then for all this he offers praise, gives thanks, and turns to prayer.

Fourth Discourse

On spiritual death

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

When you die to the created world, you will be told: "Allāh have mercy on you! May He now let you die to passionate desire." When you die to your passionate desire, you will be told: "Allāh have mercy on you! May He now let you die to your willing and wishing." When you die to your will, you will be told: "Allāh have mercy on you! May He now restore you to a life beyond which there is no death."

You will then be enriched with a wealth behind which comes no poverty; you will be granted a gift behind which comes no deprivation; you will be given a comfort behind which comes no distress; you will be favored with a bliss behind which comes no misery; you will be schooled in a knowledge behind which comes no ignorance; you will be assured of a security behind which comes no fear. You will be made so prosperous that you are never exposed to hardship, so honored that you never suffer disgrace, so established that you cannot be dismissed, so exalted that you will never be abased, so respected that you are never treated with contempt, so purified that you will never be defiled. Thus hopeful aspirations for you will be realized, and good reports of you will be confirmed.

You will become a philosopher's stone and therefore almost imperceptible, so distinguished that you have no match, so special that you have no peer, so unique that you are one of a kind, singular and unpaired, a total mystery and an absolute secret.

You will then be the heir of every Prophet [*nabi*] and Champion of Truth [*siddiq*] and Messenger [*rasūl*]. Saintship [*al-wilāyah*] will culminate in you, and toward you the *Abdāl* * will all incline. Through you anxieties will be dispelled. Through you the rains will bring water and the crops will grow. Through you troubles and

* See Sixth Discourse, second to last paragraph.

afflictions will be averted from people of distinction and common folk, inhabitants of the dangerous frontiers, ruler and subject, leaders and society at large.

You will be the prefect of the country and its population, so people will set out to reach you in haste, to pay their respects, present gifts and do service, by leave of the Creator of all things, in all kinds of affairs. All tongues will everywhere be speaking well of you and singing your praises, for no two persons of faith will disagree about you, O best of those who dwell in the land or travel about therein.

Such is the bounty of Allāh, which He bestows on whom He will. Allāh is the Lord of infinite bounty. (62:4)

Fifth Discourse

*On the nature of this world, detachment from which
is strongly advised*

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

You see this world in the hands of those who keep it going, with its ornaments and vanities, its deceptions and snares, and its lethal poisons. Its surface is so smooth to the touch, while the inside is rapacious, quick to bring ruin and death to those who touch it and fall under its delusion, forgetting its evil motives, its fickleness and breach of promise. When you see all this, you must behave like someone who sees a man in the act of defecating, with his private parts exposed and causing an unpleasant odor.

Just as you would avert your gaze from his nakedness, and hold your nose against the stinking smell, so must you behave towards the world: When you see it, look away from its charms and hold your nose against the stench emitted by its lechery and lust. Thus you may escape the world's corrupting influence, yet still receive your allotted share of worldly goods—yours to enjoy! As Allāh (Exalted is He) said to His chosen Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

Strain not your eyes toward that which We have given for some pairs among them to enjoy—the flower of this world's life, that We may thereby put them to the test. Your Lord's provision is better and more lasting. (20:131)

Sixth Discourse

On passing beyond the creation

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Become extinct to all created beings by Allāh's leave, to your passionate desire (*bawā*) by His command: "In Allāh put your trust if you are true believers" (5:23), and to your own will by His action (Exalted is He.) Then you will be a vessel fit to receive the knowledge of Allāh (Exalted is He.)

What signifies your 'being extinct' to Allāh's creatures is your isolation and detachment from them, and loss of interest in things at their disposal.

Extinction to your passionate desire is marked by giving up the habit of striving to acquire worldly means in order to procure benefit and cause harm. You make no movement on your own behalf, do nothing to or for yourself on purpose, take no action to defend or help yourself, but entrust all that to Allāh (Exalted is He), because He was in charge of it in the first place, and He will take care of it to the end, just as it was entrusted to Him when you were hidden inside the womb, and when you were a suckling babe in your cradle.

Your extinction to self-will (*irāda*) through the action of Allāh is indicated by your never formulating any personal goal, your lack of selfish interest, and the fact that you no longer feel any want or craving, for besides the will of Allāh you wish for nothing else. Instead, the action of Allāh is at work in you, so that while you are experiencing Allāh's will and action your limbs become relaxed, your mind becomes calm and your feelings widen, your face begins to glow and your inner being thrives. In contact with their Creator, you feel no need of things.

The hand of Power will turn you every way about, and the tongue of Eternity will summon you. The Lord of all religions will teach you, and clothe you in beams of His own light and special raiment, and

install you among those possessed of ancient knowledge.

This will leave you permanently contrite, incapable of holding any carnal appetite or will, like a cracked vessel that cannot retain either liquid or dregs. You will be estranged from ordinary human standards of behavior, for your inner being will not accept anything other than the will of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He!)

At this stage you may be credited with working miracles and supernatural phenomena, for such manifestations will bear the outward appearance of emanating from you, though in reality they are the work of Allāh and His will.

Now you will be admitted to the company of those whose hearts have been shattered, their human will-power broken and their natural appetites eliminated, and who have then been re-endowed—but with a Will Sublime [*Rabbāniyya*: ‘pertaining to the Lord’]. As the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) said: “Three things belonging to this world of yours have been made dear to me: perfume, women, and as cool refreshment for my eyes, the [Islamic] prayer.” Of course, to confirm the point we have already indicated, these things were added unto him anew—after they had left him and become unreal to him.

Allāh (Exalted is He) has said: “I am with those who are broken-hearted on My account.” So Allāh (Exalted is He) will not be with you until you totally disown your desire and your will. When these are broken, and you contain nothing stable or useful, Allāh will create you afresh and install in you a new power of will for you to exercise. If any element of self creeps into this newly created will, however, the Lord (Exalted is He) will smash it again. You will always be left broken-hearted, because He will repeat this process until the book of destiny ends with reunion [*līqā’*]. This is the meaning of: “I am with those who are broken-hearted on My account.” When we speak of an element of self creeping in, we mean that you become sure and self-confident in relation to the new will.

In a Sacred Tradition [*hadīth qudsī*] related by the blessed Prophet,

Allāh (Exalted is He) says: "My servant constantly approaches Me through supererogatory acts of worship until I love him, and when I love him, I become his ears with which he hears, his eyes with which he sees, his hands with which he holds, and his legs with which he walks." In another version, the wording is: "So through Me he hears, through Me he sees, and through Me he understands."

This comes about in the state of annihilation (*al-faṇā'*) and no other. When you become extinct in relation to yourself and to all creatures, the whole creation being good and evil, as you likewise are good and evil, you neither hope for any good nor fear any evil therefrom. Only Allāh remains, Alone as He ever was. Good and evil are part of Allāh's plan, so He will keep you safe from His evil, and will immerse you in the oceans of His good. You will become the receptacle of all that is good, a stronghold for every blessing, happiness and joy, a beacon of security and peace.

Annihilation is therefore the aim and object, the final destination of the journey of the saints. This was the direction sought by all previous saints and *Abdāl*: to become extinct to their own will, and let the will of the Almighty and Glorious Truth take its place, as a permanent transformation, lasting until death. That is why they came to be called *Abdāl* [lit.: 'substitutes'] (may Allāh be well pleased with them all.)

For these masters, it is sinful to associate the will of the divine Truth with their own will, through absentmindedness, forgetfulness, onset of rapture, or moment of alarm, so Allāh (Exalted is He) mercifully jolts them with a reminder to be vigilant. They then pull themselves together, and ask forgiveness of their Lord, for none but the angels are innocent of self-will. Such innocence has been granted to the angels, while the Prophets are immune to passionate desire. As for the rest of creation, whether human beings or jinn, they are all held morally accountable and enjoy no immunity. Of course, some of the saints are preserved from passionate desire, and the *Abdāl* from self-will. But in neither case is the immunity

complete, since they may be prone to these two weaknesses at times, until Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) overtakes them with His mercy and brings them to their senses.

Seventh Discourse

On removing the cares of the heart [qalb]

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Step out of your own self and keep your distance from it. Practice detachment from your possessiveness, and surrender everything to Allāh. Become His doorman at the door of your heart, obeying His command by admitting those He instructs you to admit, and respecting His prohibition by shutting out those He instructs you to turn away, so that you do not let passion back into your heart once it has been evicted. Passion is expelled from the heart by resistance to it and refusal to follow its urges, whatever the circumstances, while compliance and acquiescence allow it to gain entry. So do not exert any will apart from His will, for anything else is your own desire, and that is the Vale of Folly, where death and destruction await you, and falling from His sight and becoming secluded from Him. Always keep His commandments, always respect His prohibitions, and always submit to what He has decreed. Do not associate Him with any part of His creation. Your will, your passions and your carnal appetites all belong to His creation, so refrain from indulging any of them lest you become a polytheist. Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

Whoever hopes to meet his Lord, let him do righteous work, and make none sharer in the worship due unto his Lord. (18:110)

Polytheism *[shirk]* is not merely the worship of idols. It is also polytheism to yield to your own passionate desire, and to equate with your Lord anything whatsoever besides Him, be it of this world and its contents or of the Hereafter and what is contained therein. What is besides Him (Almighty and Glorious is He) is other than He, so when you rely on anything other than Him you are associating something else with Him (Almighty and Glorious is He). Therefore

be wary and do not relax your guard, be fearful and do not develop a sense of security, and keep your wits about you so that you do not become careless and complacent.

Do not attribute any state or station to yourself, and have no pretensions to such things. If you are granted a special state, or elevated to some station, do not become identified with that in any way at all, for Allāh is every day about some business, effecting change and transformation. He may intervene between a man and his heart, thereby separating you from what you had professed to be your own, and making you different from what you had imagined to be your fixed and permanent condition. You will then be embarrassed in the presence of those to whom you made such claims, so you had better keep these things to yourself and not convey them to others. If something does prove stable and lasting, acknowledge it as a gift, pray for the grace to be thankful, and keep it out of sight. But even if it turns out otherwise, it will still bring progress in knowledge and understanding, enlightenment, alertness and discipline. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

Such of Our revelations as We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We replace with one better or as good. Do you not know that Allāh has power over all things? (2:106)

So do not underestimate the extent of Allāh's power, have no misgivings about His planning and His management, and never doubt His promise. Take as your model the fine example set by Allāh's Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace). He experienced the abrogation of verses and chapters revealed to him, adopted in practice, recited in the niches [of the mosques], and written down in books; as they were withdrawn and changed and replaced by others, the blessed Prophet was moved to accept the new revelations. This applies to the external dispensation of the law. As for the inner aspect, the knowledge and spiritual state experienced in his own relationship with Allāh, he used to say: "My heart gets coated with rust, so I beg Allāh's forgiveness seventy.

times each day" ("...a hundred times," according to another report).

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) would be moved from one state of being to another, and made to traverse the stations of divine proximity and the spheres of the unseen. The robes of light conferred upon him were changed as he progressed, so that each new stage would make the previous one seem dark, marred by shortcomings and inadequate observance of the guidelines. Thus he was trained to practice praying for forgiveness, because that is the best state for a servant, and constant repentance, because this involves acknowledgment of sin and shortcoming—properties of human nature inherited from Adam (peace be upon him), the father of mankind.

When the purity of Adam's spiritual state was stained by forgetfulness of the promise and covenant, he wished to dwell forever in the abode of peace, in the vicinity of the All-Merciful and Beneficent Friend, visited by the noble angels with greeting and salutation, but his self-will had come to be associated with the will of the Truth. That will of his was therefore broken, that state disappeared, that intimacy became remote, that station was degraded, those lights were dimmed, and that purity was spoiled. Then this chosen one of the All-Merciful recovered his awareness and was reminded. After being instructed in the acknowledgment of sin and forgetfulness, and trained in confession, he said: "Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You do not forgive us, and have mercy on us, we shall surely be among the lost!" (7:23).

Then came to him the light of guidance, the knowledge and inner understanding of repentance and its hidden benefits, but for which something formerly mysterious would not have become manifest. That old will was replaced by a different one, and the original state by another. He received the supreme consecration, and repose in this world and then in the hereafter, for this world became a home for him and his offspring, and the hereafter their refuge and eternal resting place.

In Allāh's Messenger and favorite friend, therefore, as in his father Adam, the Chosen of Allāh, ancestor of all dear and loving friends, you have an example to follow in confessing faults and praying for forgiveness under all circumstances.

Eighth Discourse

On drawing near to Allāh

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

When you are in a particular condition, do not seek to exchange it for another, whether higher or lower. If you are at the gate of the King's palace, therefore, do not seek admittance to the palace itself until you are obliged to enter, under compulsion and not of your own accord. By compulsion I mean a stern, insistently repeated command. Do not content yourself with mere permission to enter, since this may be just a trick and deception on the King's part. You should rather wait patiently until you are compelled to go in, so that your entry into the palace will be through sheer coercion and gracious favor from the King. Then, since the action is the King's own, He will not chastise you for it. If any punishment is meted out to you, it will only be due to your wrong motivation, greed, impatience, uncouthness and discontentment with the situation in which you have been placed. When you do gain an entrée to the palace, you must therefore bow your head in silence, keep your eyes modestly downcast and mind your manners as you perform the tasks and services assigned to you, without seeking promotion to the highest summit. Consider the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

Strain not your eyes toward that which We have given for some pairs among them to enjoy—the flower of this world's life, that We may thereby put them to the test. Your Lord's provision is better and more lasting. (20:131)

This is an admonition by which He instructs His chosen Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) regarding attention to one's present state and contentment with gifts received. To paraphrase His words, "Your Lord's provision is better and more lasting," He is saying: "What I have given you in the way of good news, prophethood, knowledge, satisfaction, patience, the guardianship

of religion and a firm support the *ein*—all this is more fitting and appropriate than anything I have given [to others].”

Thus all good lies in due attention to one’s existing condition, in being content with it and ceasing to hanker after alternatives, for it can only be that something is yours by lot or is destined for another, unless it belongs to nobody and Allāh has created it only as a trial. If it is destined for you, it will come to you, like it or not. Any display of unseemly conduct and greed in its pursuit would therefore be improper on your part, with nothing in knowledge or reason to commend it. If it is destined for somebody else, spare yourself the futile effort of chasing something which you cannot get and which will never come your way. If it is only a trial, not destined to belong to anyone at all, how could an intelligent person find it worth his while to pursue such a thing and seek to acquire it for himself? Thus it is proven that all good and safety lie in properly attending to one’s present state.

When you are promoted to the upstairs room, and then to the roof, you must observe all the proprieties of quiet and polite behavior we have already mentioned. In fact you should redouble your efforts in that regard, because you are now closer to the King and nearer to danger. So do not wish for a change of state whether by promotion or demotion, and desire neither permanence and continuity nor alteration in your existing condition. You should have no self-willed option whatsoever, since that would amount to ingratitude for present blessings, and ingratitude brings disgrace upon him who is guilty thereof, in this world and the hereafter.

Let your conduct always be as we have told you, until you are promoted to a position which will become a permanent station for you, from which you will not be removed. You will then recognize it as a gift, self-explanatory and self-evident, so cling to it and do not let go. Ordinary saints (*awliyā'*) have changeable states, while permanent stations belong to the *Abdāl*.

Allāh is in charge of your guidance!

Ninth Discourse

On disclosure and contemplation

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

To saints and *Abdāl* are disclosed such workings of Allāh as baffle the mind and defy all customs and conventions. They are of two kinds: Divine Majesty (*Jalāl*) and Divine Beauty (*Ja'māl*).

Divine majesty and sublimity give rise to disconcerting fear and disquieting dread, with such a mighty impact on the heart that the effects become apparent in the physical body. Thus it is related of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) that "from his breast during prayer one could hear a humming sound like the simmering of a cooking-pot, due to the intensity of his fear," because of his vision of the majesty of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and the divine sublimity that was revealed to him. Similar experiences are attributed to Abraham, the special friend of the All-Merciful (on him be the blessings of Allāh), and to 'Umar al-Fārūq (may Allāh be well pleased with him).

As for direct contemplation of the Divine Beauty, that is an experience in which hearts are adorned with light and joy and gracious favors, sweet words and friendly conversation, glad tidings of tremendous gifts and lofty stations, and a foretaste from Him of how all their affairs must in the end return to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), for the Pen ran dry from allotting their destinies in times primordial. This is a favor from Him and a mercy, and a confirmation for them in this world until the attainment of the final term that is the time appointed. It is granted lest they exceed the bounds of love through sheer intensity of longing for Allāh (Exalted is He), so that their resolution fails and they perish, or lose the strength to stand in servitude until there comes to them the Certainty, which is death. He treats them like this out of kindness and mercy, as a therapy and to train and gently coax their hearts. "He

is All-Wise, All-Knowing" (15:25). He is Gentle with them: "Most Kind, Most Merciful" (9:117).

This explains why it is related of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) that he used to say to Bilāl the Muezzin (may Allāh be well pleased with him): "Comfort us, O Bilāl, with the signal *iqāma*, so that we may enter the prayer"—to enjoy the state of contemplation we have been discussing. This is why he said: "The cooling of my eyes has been reposed in the prayer *salāt*."

Tenth Discourse

On the self and its states

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

There is Allāh, and there is your own self [*nafsukha*], and you must address the situation. The self is the opponent and enemy of Allāh. All things are subordinate to Allāh, and the self really belongs to Him as a creature and a possession, but the self entertains presumptions and aspirations bound up with carnal appetite and sensual desire. So if you ally yourself with the divine Truth in opposition and hostility toward the self, you will be for Allāh's sake an adversary to your own self. As Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) said to David (peace be upon him): "O David, I am your indispensable support, so hold fast to your support. True servitude means being an adversary to your own self."

It is then that your friendship and servitude to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will be confirmed in reality. All that is allotted to you will then come to you for your enjoyment and pleasure. You will be held in honor and esteem, and all things will be ready to serve you with dignity and respect, for they are all subordinate to their Lord and in conformity with Him, since He is their Creator and Originator and they acknowledge their servitude to Him. Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

There is not a thing that does not celebrate His praise, and yet you do not understand their celebration. (17:44)

[Then He turned to the heaven when it was smoke] and said to it and to the earth: "Come both of you, willingly or unwillingly." They said: "We come, obedient." (41:11)

Thus servitude—all servitude—consists in opposing your own self. Allāh (Exalted is He) says:

Follow not desire, lest it lead you astray from Allāh's path. (38:26)

To David (on him be peace) He said:

Renounce your passionate desire, for it is vexatious.

There is also the well-known story of Abū Yazīd al-Bistāmī (may Allāh have mercy upon him). When he saw the Almighty Lord in a dream, he asked Him: "How can I find the way to You?" The Lord said: "Abandon your self and come here!" In response, the Saint tells us: "I shed my self as a snake sloughs off its skin."

Thus all good lies in waging total war against the self under all circumstances. If you are in a state of true devotion, therefore, you must oppose the self by not getting involved with people, whether their behavior be unlawful, merely dubious or even well-intentioned, not depending or relying on them, neither fearing them nor pinning any hopes on them, and not coveting any worldly advantages they may enjoy. Do not solicit gifts from them in the form of presents, of alms or charity, or of votive offerings. Get rid of all interest in them and in material concerns to the point where, if you had a wealthy relative, you would not want him to die so that you could inherit his wealth. Separate yourself from creatures in all earnestness. Regard them as a door that swings open and shut, or as a tree that sometimes bears fruit and at other times is barren, all in accordance with the action of a Doer and the management of a Planner, namely Allāh (Glorious and Exalted is He), so that you may be one who affirms the Unity of the Lord.

At the same time, however, we must not forget the proper role of human endeavor, to avoid subscribing to the fatalistic doctrine of the Jabariyya. Believe that no human action is accomplished without Allāh. Do not worship His creatures and forget Allāh, and do not maintain that our actions are independent of Allāh, for that will make you an unbeliever, a subscriber to the [extreme free-will doctrine of the] Qadariyya.* You should rather assert that our actions belong to Allāh in point of creation, and to His servants in point of 'acquisition' /*kasb*/, this being the traditional Islamic state-

* Not to be confused with Qādīriyya, the Sufi movement tracing its origins to the inspiration of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī.

ment on the subject of requital by reward or punishment.

Obey Allāh's command in dealing with your fellow creatures. Keep from them what is your allotted share by His command, but do not go beyond this limit. Allāh's verdict in this matter will be imposed on you and on them, so do not be the judge yourself. Your being with them is a decree of destiny, and destiny is shrouded in darkness, so expose that darkness to the Lamp, meaning the Book of Allāh and the exemplary practice (*Sunnah*) of His Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace). Do not step outside these two. If some idea occurs to you, or if you receive an inspiration, check it against the Book and Sunna.

By this criterion, you may find that your idea or inspired notion is declared unlawful. Suppose, for instance, you have received an indication to commit fornication, to practice usury, to consort with dissolute and immoral characters, or to behave in some other sinful manner. This you must repudiate, renounce, refuse to accept and refrain from acting out. Be convinced that it is from Satan the accursed.

Perhaps what you find there will be a license, such as that granted to normal appetites for food, drink, clothing or matrimony. This you should also refuse and decline to accept, recognizing that the suggestion stems from the lower self and its animal cravings, which you are under orders to oppose and combat.

It may also happen that you find nothing in Book and Sunna to show that what has occurred to you is under either prohibition or license. Maybe it is something you are at a loss to understand, like an urge prompting you to go to such-and-such a place to meet a certain good man, although you have nothing to gain there or from the good person concerned, since your needs are already taken care of through the knowledge and wisdom Allāh has graciously bestowed on you. In a case like this, you should pause and not react immediately. Instead of saying, "This is an inspiration from the Truth (*al-Haqq*) (Glorious and Exalted is He) so I shall act upon it," prefer to wait for the full potential benefit. The divine Truth works

in such a way that the inspiration */iḥbām/* will be clarified through repetition, and you will be told what steps to take. To people with knowledge */'ilm/* of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), a sign will be revealed, intelligible only to saints of mature understanding and confirmed *Abdāl*.

The reason for not being in great haste to act is that you do not know the consequences and the ultimate purpose of the affair, nor the snares and pitfalls it contains, with cunning tests devised by Allāh. So be patient until He is the one at work within you. When the action is absolutely stripped of self, and you are borne toward that destination, you will be carried safely through any trial that may still confront you, because Allāh (Exalted is He) will not chastise you for His own doing; no penalty can apply to you unless you get personally involved.

If you are in the state of reality */baqīqāl/*, which is the state of sainthood */wilaŷāl/*, you must oppose your passions and obey the commandments in their entirety. Obedience to the commandments is of two kinds:

One kind means taking just enough from this world to supply your genuine personal needs, forsaking extravagant indulgence, performing your religious duties, and making efforts to get rid of your sins, both outwardly and inwardly.

The second kind is obedience to an inner command, one by which the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) orders or forbids His servant to do something. Such commands apply only in the sphere of 'neutral' matters, which are not covered by any positive injunction in Islamic law, in the sense that they belong neither to the category of prohibited things, nor to the category of things that are obligatory; since they are legally indifferent, the servant being at liberty to handle them according to his own discretion, they are called *mubāb* [neutral/indifferent/permissible]. Rather than taking any initiative in this area, the servant should wait to receive instructions, then obey the order when it comes. He will thus be with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) in all his doings, whether in movement or at rest, through his respect for the rules of

sacred law where they apply, and that inner commandment in other cases. At this stage he genuinely belongs among the People of Reality [*ahl al-haqiqah*].

In the absence even of this inner commandment, there is nothing for it but spontaneous action in a state of surrender. If you are in touch with the truth of truth, this is the state of obliteration (*mahw*) and annihilation (*fana*), the state of the *Abdāl* who are broken-hearted on account of Him, the state of pure monotheists, men of enlightened wisdom, endowed with knowledge and power of understanding, the commanders-in-chief, the wardens and guardians of mankind, the vicegerents of the All-Merciful, and His intimates and helpers and friends, peace be upon them.

To obey the commandment in such matters means going against your own self, emptied of any power or strength, utterly devoid of all will and ambition for anything of this world or the hereafter. You come to be the servant of the King, not of the Kingdom, of His commandment and not of whim and passion. You come to resemble a babe at his nurse's breast, a corpse receiving its ritual wash, a patient lying sprawled for treatment by the doctor, in all that is not subject to the injunctions and prohibitions [specified by the sacred law].

Only Allāh is All-Knowing!

Eleventh Discourse

On carnal appetite

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Suppose the arousal of your sexual appetite occurs at a point where marriage would be far too expensive for one in your impoverished condition, so you control yourself in patient expectation of relief from the Maker (Almighty and Glorious is He). By His power He may remove the urge engendered and aroused in you by that very power, and thus relieve you of it. He may also enable you to lead a virtuous life without having to bear the burden of marriage, or He may provide you with the necessary means, as a gift with His blessings, to make it light for you in this world and easy in the hereafter.

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will call you patient and grateful because of your patience in the matter, content to accept His Providence, and will therefore increase you in virtue and strength. For if it is your destiny to have your needs sufficiently and pleasantly supplied, your patience will turn into gratitude, and the Almighty and Glorious One has promised those who are grateful still further abundance of gifts, in His words:

“If you are thankful, I will give you more; but if you are ungrateful, My punishment is terrible indeed. (14:7)

Should this not be your destined lot, however, you must survive without it by uprooting the craving from your heart, whether the self is willing or reluctant. Practice patience and oppose your desire. Hold fast to the commandment of the Law, and accept the decree of Providence, hoping thereby to receive divine grace and favor. As Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

Those who patiently persevere will truly receive a reward without measure. (39:10)

Twelfth Discourse

On the prohibition of love of wealth

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

When Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) gives you wealth, and you let your preoccupation with it distract you from obedient service to Him, He makes it a barrier between you and Himself in both this world and the hereafter. Perhaps he will dispossess you of that wealth, alter you and reduce you to poverty, as punishment for letting your preoccupation with the gift distract you from the Giver. But if you pay more attention to obeying Him than to material wealth, He will make you a present of it without deducting a single atom.

Wealth is your servant, and you are the servant of the Master *[al-Mawla]*. You should therefore lead a pampered life in this world, and enjoy an honorable and agreeable existence in the hereafter, in the garden of eternal abode, in the company of the champions of truth, the martyrs and the righteous.

Thirteenth Discourse

On submission to Allāh's command

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Do not exert yourself to attract prosperity or to avert misfortune. Prosperity will come to you if it is your lot, whether you seek to acquire it or view it with distaste. Misfortune will likewise overtake you if it is meant for you by destiny's decree, whether you be averse to it, or pray for it to go away, or confront it with patience and fortitude to please the Lord.

Your only resort is total surrender, allowing the process to work within you. If the experience proves to be a happy one, you must endeavor to show gratitude. Should it be an ordeal, you must exercise patience and perseverance, try to accept it with good grace, or lose yourself in it and become detached by virtue of the spiritual states *[bālāt]* you are given to traverse, and the stations *[manāzil]* to which you are made to travel on the path of the Lord, whom you are commanded to obey and befriend, that you may get to meet the Companion Most High.

You will then be installed in a position where your predecessors are the champions of the truth, the martyrs and the righteous, so that you may see with your own eyes all those who have gone before you to reach the King, who have drawn close to Him and found in His presence every exquisite delight, joy and security, honor and bliss.

Let tribulation visit you. Allow it to take its course, and do not fret about its onset and approach, for its fire is not more terrible than the fire of Hell and its blazing inferno. According to traditions reliably ascribed to the best of humankind, the best of those ever carried by the earth and sheltered by the sky, Muḥammad the Chosen (Allāh bless him and give him peace), he said: "The fire of Hell will say to the believer, 'Move on, believer! Your light has extinguished my flame!'"

Is the believer's light that puts out the flame of Hell any other than the one that escorts him in this wor'd, while disobedient sinners go unguided by it? Let this same light extinguish misfortune's flame, and let the coolness of your patience and your harmony with the Lord take the heat out of the suffering you have to undergo. The affliction will then have come not to destroy you, but to try you and to confirm the soundness of your faith, to consolidate the strength of your conviction, and to give you inwardly the good news from your Lord that He is proud of you. Allāh (Exalted is He) says:

Indeed We shall try you till We know those among you who strive hard and persevere in patience, and till We test your record. (47:31)

When your faith has been established with the Lord of Truth, and you have conformed to His work with full conviction, all through His help and grace, you must then be ever patient, compliant and submissive. Let nothing happen in yourself or in others that would go against the commandments or the prohibitions of the Lord. Then, when an order is received from Him (Almighty and Glorious is He), give it your full attention and be quick to respond. Get moving and do not sit around. Far from being passively resigned to the divine decree and its action, you must exert your faculties and make every effort to carry out the order.

If you find yourself incapable of this, you must at once take refuge with your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). Resort to Him and humbly beg for pardon. Look for the cause of your inability to carry out His order, and for what impedes your inclination to obey Him. The problem may be due to your asking for trouble and behaving with bad grace in His service, to your frivolous attitude and confidence in your own ability and strength, to your conceited pride in your own knowledge, or to your associating your own self and His creatures with Him. As a result, He has barred you from His door, dismissed you from His obedient service, deprived you of the support of His helpful guidance, turned His gracious countenance away from you, treated you with disgust and loathing, and left you

engrossed in your worldly worries, passions, self-will and desires.

Do you not recognize that all of this distracts you from your aim, and keeps you from the sight of Him who has created you, nourished you, blessed you with many gifts, and kept you alive?

Beware of being diverted from your Lord by anything other than your Lord. Everything besides your Lord is other than He, so accept nothing else in preference to Him, since He has created you for His own sake. Do not wrong your own soul by being preoccupied with other things to the neglect of His commandments, for that will cause you to enter the "Fire, whose fuel is men and stones" (2:24). You will be sorry, but your sorrow will not avail you. You will make excuses, but no excuse will be accepted. You will plead for another chance, but your plea will not be granted. You will seek to return to this world to make amends and put things right, but you will not be allowed to return.

Take pity on your soul and be kind to it. Make good use of the tools and instruments you have been given, by dedicating your intelligence, faith, inner awareness and knowledge to the service of your Lord. Let their light provide illumination amid the darkness of destiny. Hold fast to the divine commands and prohibitions, use them as guidelines on the path of your Lord, and leave the rest to the safekeeping of the One who created you and brought you into being. Be not ungrateful to Him who created you from dust and made you grow, who developed you from a sperm into a man. Do not wish for anything but that which He commands, and have no aversion except for that which He forbids. Let this wish be enough for all purposes of this world and the hereafter, and this aversion likewise. When you are in conformity with His commandment, all beings are at your command, and when you detest what He forbids, all loathsome things will flee from you wherever you happen to be or make your stay. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said in one of His Books:

O son of Adam, I am Allāh; there is none worthy of worship besides Me. I say to a thing, "Be," and it comes into being. Obey Me; I will make you such that you say to a thing, "Be," and there it will be.

He has also said (Almighty and Glorious is He):

O lower world, if anyone serves Me, serve him, and if anyone serves you, give him trouble.

When His prohibition comes, you should be as if you had gone flabby in the joints, with your senses out of action, drained of energy, physically incapacitated, all passion spent, all outer perceptions erased and impressions effaced, oblivious of any influence, like a toppled throne in an empty room in a ruined building on a darkened lot, devoid of sensation and out of touch. Let your ears be deaf as if from birth, your eyes as if blindfold or inflamed or totally deprived of sight, your lips as if covered with swellings and sores, your tongue as if it were mute and dumb, your teeth as if they were abscessed and aching and loose, your hands as if they were paralyzed and without any grip, your legs and feet as if they were shaky and trembling and bleeding, your genital organ as if it were impotent and without any interest in sex, your stomach as if it were bloated and quite indifferent to food, your mind as if it were crazy and deranged, your body as if you were dead and being carried to your grave.

An order calls for strict attention and a quick response. A prohibition calls for holding back, recoil and disengagement. A decree of destiny calls for acting dead, for disappearing into non-existence. Drink this draught, swallow this medicine and be nourished by this diet, so that you may flourish in good health, and be cured of the sicknesses of sin and the diseases of desire, by Allāh's leave (Exalted is He) and if He will.

Fourteenth Discourse

On following the practice of Allāh's own

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

○ slave of passionate desire, do not pretend to be in the same condition as Allāh's own people! You serve your passions, while they are servants of the Lord. Your longing is for this world, while His people yearn for the hereafter. You behold this world, while they behold the Lord of earth and heaven. You enjoy creature comforts, while His people feel at home with the Truth. Your heart is attached to earthly beings, while the hearts of His people belong to the Lord of the Throne. You are preyed upon by those you notice, whereas they do not even see those whom you notice, but see only the Creator of all things and whatever He may show. His people attain to Him and achieve their salvation, while you remain in pawn to your worldly cravings and perish. They are extinct to the creation, to passion and will and desire, for they have attained to the contact with the King Most High, and He helps them to accomplish what he wants from them in the way of obedient worship, eulogy and praise.

Such is Allāh's grace, which He gives unto whom He will. (5:54)

In this they have persisted and have persevered, with help from Him and smooth facilitation, so that obedience has become for them a breath of life and a form of nourishment. Accordingly, this world has come to be a blessing and good fortune from their point of view; it seems like Paradise to them, because they never see anything without first seeing the action of Him who created it and brought it into being.

They are there to ensure the steadiness of earth and sky and the ongoing process of death and life-renewal, since their Owner has used them as pegs to support the earth He has spread out, and so

each one is like a mountain standing firm. Step out of their path, therefore, and do not jostle those whom neither parents nor children could ransom from their purpose. These are the best of those my Lord has created and scattered and dispersed upon the earth, so on them be the peace of Allāh and His greetings as long as earth and heaven endure.

Fifteenth Discourse

On fear and hope

The Shaikh (sanctified be the mighty secret of his being) said:

I had a dream in which I seemed to be in a mosque-like place, where some people were living as hermits. "If only these people had so-and-so to give them training and guidance," said I, alluding to a certain man of virtue. Thereupon they all gathered around me, and one of them said: "Why don't you talk to us yourself?"

"Very well, if you would like me to do so," I agreed, then I went on to say: "Once you have isolated yourselves from creatures to devote yourselves to the Truth, do not ask people for anything with your tongues, and when you have given that up, do not ask them for anything in your hearts, for asking inwardly is just like asking in words. Then you must know that Allāh is every day about some business, changing and transforming, raising up and bringing down. Some people He raises to the highest heights, and some He reduces to the lowest of the low. Then in those He has raised to the highest heights He instills the fear that He may reduce them to the lowest of the low, while their hope is that He will keep and preserve them in the exalted state they now enjoy. And in those He has reduced to the lowest of the low He instills the fear that He may keep them forever in the degradation they now suffer, while their hope is that He will raise them to the highest heights."

Then I woke up.

Sixteenth Discourse

On trust and its stages

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Nothing blocks you from direct receiving of Allāh's grace and favor except your reliance upon people and connections, on good turns and handouts. Thus creatures are your obstacle to gaining a proper livelihood, in keeping with the exemplary practice of the Prophet. As long as you continue to depend on fellow creatures, hoping for their gifts and favors, going from door to door with your requests, you are associating His creation with Allāh. He will therefore punish you with deprivation of that proper livelihood, namely the lawful earnings of this world.

Then, when you have renounced the habit of depending on people and associating them with your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and have resorted to earning your own livelihood, you get to rely on this earning power and become complacent about it, forgetting the gracious favor of your Lord. You are once again behaving like a polytheist (*mushrik*), only now the polytheism (*Isbirk*) is concealed, of a subtler nature than the previous kind. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will therefore punish you by depriving you of His favor and of direct access to Him.

When you turn from this in repentance, ceasing to allow the encroachment of polytheism, and forsaking reliance on your own earning power and abilities, you will see that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is the Provider. It is He who supplies the means, the facilities and the energy one needs to make a living, and He is the One who enables all good results to be achieved. All sustenance is in His hand. At times He may supply it to you by way of other people, through your appealing to them while in distress or trying straits, or in response to your appeal to Him (Almighty and Glorious is He), sometimes by way of earned remuneration, and at still other

times by His spontaneous favor, in such a way that you do not see the intervening cause and means.

You have turned again to Him, casting yourself down before Him, and He has lifted the veil between you and His favor. He has made Himself accessible to you, and graciously ministers to all your needs in the measure appropriate to your condition, acting like a kind and tactful physician who is also a friend to the patient. As a precaution on His part, and to purge you of any attachment to anyone but Him, He satisfies you with His favor.

Once your heart has been detached from all self-will, all lust and indulgence, craving and desire, there is nothing left in your heart except His will (Almighty and Glorious is He). So when He wishes to send you your allotted share (which you are bound to receive and which is not earmarked for any of His creatures apart from you), He will cause a desire for that share to arise within you, and will dispatch it to you so that it reaches you when you need it. Then He will help you to recognize that it comes from Him and to acknowledge Him with conscious gratitude as the sender and supplier of what you have received. As this moves you further away from attachment to creatures, from involvement with people, your inner being is emptied of all besides Him (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Then, when your knowledge and conviction have been fortified, when your feelings have been expanded and your heart has been enlightened, and your nearness to your Lord and your standing in His sight have thereby increased, as well your competence for the guarding of secrets, you will be allowed to know beforehand when you are to receive your allotted share. This privilege will be granted in your honor, to exalt your dignity, as a gracious favor and guidance from Him. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

And We appointed from among them leaders guiding by Our command, when they endured patiently, and had sure faith in Our signs. (32:24)

Allāh (Exalted is He) also says:

As for those who strive in Our cause, We surely guide them in Our ways. (29:69)

And the Exalted One says:

Observe your duty to Allāh. Allāh will teach you. (2:282)

Then He will invest you with creative power, which you may exercise with clear and unambiguous permission, with tokens brilliant as the radiant sun, with His sweet words far sweeter than all sweetness, with inspiration true and unequivocal, untainted by the promptings of the self and the whisperings of Satan the accursed. Allāh (Exalted is He) has said in one of His scriptures:

O son of Adam, I am Allāh. There is none worthy of worship but I alone. I say to a thing, "Be," and it comes into being. Obey Me and I will make you such that you say to a thing, "Be," and it will come into being.

Thus He has dealt with many of His Prophets, His saints, and His special favorites among the children of Adam.

Seventeenth Discourse

On how the contact [wuṣūl] with Allāh is attained

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

When you attain the contact with Allāh and get close to Him through His attraction and His helpful guidance—what is meant by attaining the contact with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is that you make your exit from the sphere of creation, from passion and will and desire, and become securely linked to His action, so that no movement of yours affects either you or His creation unless by His decree, at His command and through His action—this is the state of annihilation (*fana*), which is another term for that contact. But attaining to the contact with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is not like what we ordinarily understand by making contact with one of His creatures.

There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing. (42:11)

The Creator is far above comparison with His creatures or analogy with His artifacts. When someone attains to the contact with Him (Almighty and Glorious is He), that person becomes known, through His introduction, to others who have already experienced the contact. In each case the experience is unique and peculiar to the individual concerned.

With each of His Messengers, Prophets and Saints, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) shares a secret to which no one else is privy. It may even be that a pupil holds a secret with which his Shaikh is not acquainted, just as the Shaikh may hold a secret unknown to a pupil whose progress has brought him to the very threshold of his Shaikh's spiritual state.

When the pupil does reach the spiritual state of his Shaikh, he is separated from the Shaikh and his connection with him is severed. The Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) becomes his

guardian, and weans him from creatures altogether. The Shaikh is therefore like a wet nurse. Just as the foster-mother's suckling does not continue beyond two years, dependence on creatures does not outlast the cessation of passion and self-will. The Shaikh is needed as long as passion and self-will are still there to be broken, but not after these have been eradicated, leaving no stain or blemish.

When you have attained to the contact with the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) in the way we have explained, you must always feel safe from whatever is besides Him, for you will not see anything other than Him as having any existence at all. Whether in loss or in profit, in giving or withholding, in fear or in hope, you will see only Him (Almighty and Glorious is He), who is worthy of pious devotion and deserves to be begged for forgiveness. You must therefore be ever alert to His action, ready for His command, employed in His obedient service, aloof from all worldly or otherworldly beings of His creation. Do not attach your heart to any kind of creature.

Regard the entire created universe as a man who has been clapped in irons by a ruler of vast authority and stern command, of terrifying might and power. He has had the man shackled by the neck and legs, then crucified him on a cedar tree on the bank of a very turbulent river, of great width and depth and with a rapid current. Now the ruler is seated on his colossal throne, which towers high beyond reach. Stacked by his side are piles of darts, spears, bows and arrows and all sorts of weapons, in quantities that only he could estimate. He starts pelting the crucified victim with anything he fancies from that arsenal... Well, let me ask you: Would it make good sense for a person witnessing all this to stop paying attention to the ruler as the focus of his fears and hopes, and to direct his attention, with all his fears and hopes, toward the crucified victim instead? Surely the sensible verdict on someone who acted like that would be to call him mentally deficient, idiotic, crazy, more animal than human?

We seek refuge with Allāh from blindness after sight, from

separation after contact, from alienation after closeness and proximity, from error after guidance, and from unbelief after true faith.

This world is like the great swift-flowing river referred to above. Each day it carries more water, symbolic of the carnal appetites of mankind, their indulgence of those appetites, and the disasters that befall them in consequence. As for the arrows and assorted weapons, these represent the trials that destiny brings their way. For the most part, what human beings experience in this world is a series of misfortunes and woes, sufferings and adversities. Any comforts and pleasures they happen to find there are subject to pernicious contaminants.

The lesson drawn from this by any intelligent observer must be that he has no real life or relaxation except in the hereafter—provided he is a believer (*mu'min*), for this applies exclusively to believers. As the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) said: "There is no life except the life of the hereafter." He also said: "There is no comfort for the believer this side of meeting his Lord." This has relevance for believers, like another saying of his (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "This world is the believer's prison and the unbeliever's paradise." He also said: "The virtuous man is bridled."

In the light of all these traditions and our own direct experience, how can a case be made in favor of life in this world? The only true comfort lies in exclusive contact with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), in being in harmony with Him, and in casting oneself down in absolute surrender before Him. This is how the servant can find freedom from this world, to bask thenceforth in compassion and mercy, kindness and charity and gracious favor.

Only Allāh is All-Knowing!

Eighteenth Discourse

On not complaining

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Let me give you a piece of advice: Never complain to anyone about your luck, whether he be friend or foe, and do not accuse the Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) of treating you badly and making you suffer misfortune. You should rather proclaim your blessings and your gratitude. Better even to tell a lie by expressing gratitude for a benefit you have not received, than to state the plain fact of your situation truthfully but as a complaint. Who is totally without the grace of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He)? Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

And if you count the favor of Allāh, you will never add it up. (16:18)

How many blessings you enjoy without acknowledging them for what they are! Do not settle for any mere creature as your confidant and intimate companion, and tell no one about your problems. It is rather with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) that you should be on intimate and confidential terms, and any complaining you do should be about Him and addressed to Him. Recognize no other party, for none has any power to bring you loss or gain, income or expenditure, honor or disgrace, promotion or demotion, poverty or affluence, movement or rest. All things are the creation of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). They lie in the hand of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and the way they function is at His command and by His leave. Each runs its course until a time appointed, and everything is regulated by Him. There is no advancing what He has postponed, and no putting back what He has brought to the fore. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

If Allāh afflicts you with some hurt, none can remove it but He; and if He desires any good for you, none can repel His bounty. He

causes it to reach whomsoever He will of His servants. He is the All-Forgiving, the All-Compassionate. (10:107)

If you complain about Him (Almighty and Glorious is He) while you are in good health and already enjoy some blessing, just wanting to get more and shutting your eyes contemptuously to the benefit and well-being you have received from Him, He will be angry with you and deprive you of both. He will give you something real to complain about, doubling your trouble, intensifying the chastisement and detestation and loathing you must suffer, and casting you down out of His sight.

You should be very wary of complaining, even if you were being dissected and having your own flesh clipped away with scissors. Beware, beware, and yet again beware! Allāh, Allāh, and yet again Allāh! Escape, escape! Take care, take care!

Most of the various disasters that afflict a human being are due to his complaints against his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). How can one have any grievance against Him, when He is the Most Merciful of the merciful, the Best of all judges, Wise, Aware, Gracious, Compassionate; when He is Kind to His servants and not a cruel slave-master; when He is like a wise, sympathetic and kindly family doctor?

Would you find fault with a tender-hearted mother? The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) said: "Allāh is more merciful toward His servant than a mother toward her child."

Be on your best behavior, you poor wretch! Persevere in the face of misfortune, even if you are incapable of patience. Then be patient even if you are incapable of conforming with good grace. Then conform with good grace if you are there to be found. Then cease to exist if you are nowhere to be found. O philosopher's stone, where are you, where can you be found and seen? Do you not heed His words (Almighty and Glorious is He):

Fighting is prescribed for you, though it be hateful to you. But it may happen that you hate a thing which is good for you, and may happen that you love a thing which is bad for you. Allāh knows, and you know not. (2:216)

Knowledge of the reality of things has been kept from you under wraps, and you have been kept from it behind a screen. So do not misbehave yourself, whatever your likes or dislikes. Follow the sacred law in whatever may befall you, if you are in the state of piety [*taqwâ*] which is the first step. Follow direct orders, without exceeding them, if you are in the state of consecration [*wilâya*] and the extinction of desire [*kbûmûd wujûd al-hawâ*], which is the second step. Harmonize gladly with the divine action and become totally absorbed in the state of *Badaliyya*, *Ghawthiyya*, *Quibiyya* and *Siddiqiyya*^{*}, which are the ultimate stages.

Stand clear of destiny's path; get out of its way. Give up self and desire. Keep your tongue from complaining. Provided you do this, then if what is meant for you is good, the Lord will grant you extra pleasure, happiness and joy; and if it is bad, He will keep you safe in His obedient service while it runs its course. He will absolve you of blame, and keep you unaffected while it lasts, until it is all over for you and becomes a thing of the past—as night ends with the dawning of the day, and as the chill of winter takes its leave when summer comes around. Here is an example for you, so note the moral well.

There are so many sins and errors and outrages, so many kinds of offenses and faults that cause defilement.

To be worthy of the company of the Noble Lord, one must be purged of the impurities of sins and failings. No one is granted an audience at His court unless he is unstained by the filth of pretentiousness and self-conceit, just as no one is fit for the company of kings without being cleansed of all impurities and every kind of stench and dirt. Misfortunes have an expiatory and purificatory effect. As the Prophet (Allâh bless him and give him peace) so truthfully said: "One day's fever is atonement for a year [of sin]."

* The abstract qualities of *Badal* [singular of *Abdâl*], *Ghawth* [lit.: Help, Succor], *Quâb* [lit.: Pole or Axis] and *Siddiq* [Champion of Truth], respectively.

Nineteenth Discourse

On promises

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

If a promise is made to you while you are still weak in faith and conviction, that promise will surely be kept and not broken, lest you should lose what little faith and certainty you have. When these qualities become stronger and are firmly established in your heart, you will hear these words of His addressed to you:

You are today in our presence established and worthy of trust.
(12:54)

This address will be repeated to you in state after state, as you become one of the elect; no, one of the elect of the elect. You will retain no will or purpose of your own, no more self-gratifying conduct, no sycophantic aspiration or ambitious quest for coveted position. Having come to resemble a cracked vessel that can hold no liquid content, you will lose all capacity for willful and habitual motivation toward achieving anything at all, be it worldly or otherworldly. You will be cleansed of everything apart from Allāh (Exalted is He). From Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) you will receive your satisfaction, and the promise of His good pleasure with you. You will be enabled to enjoy and take delight in all the workings of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Now you will be given a promise, but just when you feel complacent about it and some trace of self-will is detected there, you will be moved on from this promise to one that is higher. You will be turned toward one that is nobler, compensating for the first by making it redundant. The doors of inner and outer knowledge will be opened unto you, and you will gain insight into things mysterious, realities of wisdom, and the secret benefits of moving on from the previous promise to that which followed it.

In your new position you will experience increased retention of

your spiritual state, then also of articulate utterance. You will be entrusted with the preservation of secrets, expansion of the feelings and enlightenment of the heart, eloquence of the tongue and profound wisdom. You will attract such affection that you become the darling of the entire creation; of humans, jinn and all other beings in this world and the hereafter. For you have become the loved one of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), and creatures follow their Creator (Glorious and Exalted is He). Their love is subsumed under His love, just as their hatred is subsumed under His hatred.

After you have been brought to this station where you have no self-willed desire for anything at all, you will be given the opportunity to want something or other. If it turns out that you do in fact desire that object, the thing will be removed and made to disappear. You will be kept from having it, and it will not be given to you in this world, but in the hereafter you will be compensated with something that increases your closeness and intimate proximity to the Lord Most High, something to cool your eyes in the highest paradise and garden of permanent abode. It may be, however, that you never sought that object, that you neither hoped nor wished for it in the realm of this lower world, this fleeting realm of trouble and toil. If what you longed for there was rather the countenance of Him who creates and fashions, who withholds and gives, who has laid out the earth and held up the sky, if such was your wish and desire and yearning, then perhaps you will be compensated even in this world with something very close or similar to it, after your heart and vision have been broken. Then He will turn you away from that wish and desire, and the true compensation will be received in the hereafter, as we have mentioned and explained.

Only Allāh (Glory be to Him) is All-Knowing!

Twentieth Discourse

On the saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "Leave anything that makes you doubtful and stick to what arouses no misgivings in you."

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him) said:

Discard anything that strikes you as dubious if it is mixed up with something that inspires no such doubts. Choose the course that bears no taint of doubt or suspicion and leave what causes you to have misgivings. In a case where you can isolate the ambiguous element, which tends to prick and chafe your conscience, you should bide your time and watch for an inner instruction. Then if you receive the order to proceed in the matter, go ahead and do so. But if you are stopped and told to refrain, you must desist. Treat it as something that never was, that never existed.

Go back to the door of your Lord and seek sustenance from Him, even if you are incapable of patience or conformity or cheerful acceptance or annihilation (*sana'*). Your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) does not need to be reminded, for He is never neglectful of you or anyone else. He feeds the unbelievers, the hypocrites, and those who turn their backs on Him (Almighty and Glorious is He), so how could He forget you, O believer, who affirm His Oneness, obey Him diligently, and carry out His orders by night and by day?

Another dimension of meaning: Let go of what people have at their disposal. Give up trying to acquire it, and stop setting your heart on it. You should neither expect anything of people nor be afraid of them, but receive from the bounty of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), for this is what will cause you no misgivings. Let there be only one of whom you ask, one giver, one object of your hope and fear, one being and one aspiration, namely your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). The forelocks of kings are in His hand, as are human hearts, the princes of our physical bodies. People's property belongs to Him (Almighty and Glorious is He), for

they are His agents and trustees. When they give you something, the movement of their hands is by His permission, His command, His motivation (Almighty and Glorious is He), and likewise when they hold back from making you a gift.

He says (Almighty and Glorious is He): "Ask Allāh of His bounty" (4:32). He also says (Exalted is He): "Those you serve instead of Allāh have no power to provide for you. So seek your provision from Allāh, and serve Him, and give thanks unto Him; to Him you shall be returned" (29:17). He also says (Glory be to Him): "And when My servants ask you about Me, surely I am near. I answer the call of the caller when he calls to Me" (2:186). And He says (Exalted is He): "Call upon Me and I will answer you" (40:60). And He says (Exalted is He): "Surely Allāh is the All-Provider, the Lord of unbreakable might" (51:58). And He says also (Exalted is He): "Allāh provides sustenance to whom He will without reckoning" (3:37).

Twenty-first Discourse

On addressing Iblis the accursed

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

I saw Iblis in a dream, where I was in the midst of a big crowd. I was on the point of killing him, when he said to me (may Allāh curse him): "Why are you going to kill me? What is my offense? If evil is entailed by destiny, I am powerless to change it and transform it into good, and if good is so entailed I cannot change it and transform it into evil. So what do I control?"

Hermaphroditic in appearance, he was soft-spoken, with distorted features, wisps of hair on his chin, misshapen and deformed. When he smiled at me, the smile was bashful and apprehensive.

This happened on the night of Sunday, 12th of Dhu'l-Hijja in the year 516 [of the Hijra].

Allāh is the Guide to all that is good!

Twenty-second Discourse

On the testing of the believer's faith

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Allāh is always testing His believing servant in proportion to his faith. Thus if a person's faith is very great and steadily increasing, his trial will be great as well. The trial of a Messenger is greater than that of a Prophet, because his faith is greater. The trial of a Prophet is greater than that of a *Badal*, and the trial of a *Badal* is greater than that of a *Wāli*. Each is tried according to his faith and certitude, on the basis of this saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "We, the Community of Prophets, are the people most severely tried, then others according to the perfection of their faith."

Allāh (Exalted is He) subjects these honorable masters to incessant testing, so they will always stay in His presence and never relax their vigilance, for He loves them. They are the people of love, who love the Lord of Truth, and the lover never likes to be far from his beloved. Affliction serves as a clamp for their hearts and a noose for their selfish natures, checking their tendency to drift away from their true goal and to place their confidence and trust in others instead of their Creator.

As this becomes a permanent condition for them, their passions melt, their selves are broken, and truth is distinguished from falsehood. Then cravings, willful desires, and the appetite for pleasure and comfort in this world and the hereafter, all retract toward the sphere of the self, while toward the sphere of the heart come trust in the promise of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), cheerful acceptance of His decree, satisfaction with His gifts, patient endurance of His trials, and the feeling of safety from the evil of His creatures. Thus the power of the heart is strengthened, and it acquires control over all the limbs and organs of the body. Tribulation fortifies the heart and certitude, verifies

faith and patience, and weakens the self and the passions, because whenever suffering comes, and what it meets with in the believer is patience, cheerful acceptance, and surrender to the action of the Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), the Exalted Lord is pleased with him and thanks him. Then he also receives help, additional blessings and success. Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

If you are thankful, I will give you more. (14:7)

When the self is moved to apply to the heart (*qalb*) for satisfaction of some carnal appetite or indulgence in some pleasure, and the heart agrees to this request without authorization and permission from Allāh (Exalted is He), the result is disregard for the Lord of Truth, polytheism and sinful rebellion. Allāh (Exalted is He) will therefore condemn them both to disappointment, trouble, subjection to other people, sickness and disease, injury and disorder. Both the heart and the self will get a share of this.

If the heart will not give the self what it wants, however, until it receives permission from the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) through inspiration (*ilhām*) in the case of Saints, or explicit revelation (*wahy*) in the case of Envoys and Prophets (blessing and peace be upon them) and acts accordingly in giving or withholding, then Allāh rewards them both with mercy and blessing, well-being and contentment, light and wisdom, nearness to Himself, affluence, security from disasters and help against enemies.

This you must know and remember it well! Be ready for trouble if you rush to respond to the self and to passion! Far better to pause in such cases, and await the Lord's consent (Glorious is His Majesty), so that you may remain safe in this world and the hereafter, if Allāh (Exalted is He) so will.

Twenty-third Discourse

On contentment with one's lot from Allāh

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Be content with straitened circumstances and steadfastly persevere therein, until the prescript of destiny expires and you are promoted to a higher and finer level. There you will be comfortably installed and made secure, with no worldly or otherworldly problems, no persecution or harassment. Then you will progress beyond this stage to something even more delightful and wholesome.

Know that your appointed share will not be lost to you because you give up chasing after it, just as you will never get what is not your share, for all your greedy seeking, effort and exertion. Be patient, therefore, and resign yourself to accepting your present situation. Take nothing and give nothing on your own unless and until you are ordered to do so. Neither move nor keep still of your own accord, otherwise you will have to bear not just your own suffering, but that of a creature worse than you. This is because you do wrong to behave like that, and the wrong-doer is not overlooked. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

Thus We let some of the wrong-doers have power over others. (6:129)

You are in fact in the house of a King whose command is far-reaching, whose power is immense, whose army is vast, whose will is effective, whose authority is irresistible, whose kingdom is everlasting, whose sovereignty is enduring, whose knowledge is precise, whose wisdom is profound and whose judgment is just. Not an atom's weight on earth or in heaven eludes Him, nor does the wrong of the wrong-doer escape His notice. You are the biggest wrong-doer and the worst offender, because you have set up a partner to Him (Almighty and Glorious is He) by your self-willed

behavior in dealing with yourself and His creation. Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

Ascribe no partners to Allāh; ascribing partners to Him is a tremendous wrong. (31:13)

He also says (Exalted is He):

Allāh does not forgive that any partner be ascribed to Him; less than that He forgives to whom He will. (4:116)

Be very wary of associating anything with Allāh; do not come anywhere near it. Avoid it in all your behavior, both active and passive, by night and day, in private and in public. Beware of disobedience altogether, in your limbs and organs as well as in your heart. Abandon all sin, both outwardly and inwardly. Do not run away from Him (Almighty and Glorious is He), for He will overtake you. Do not quarrel with Him over His decision; He will demolish you. Do not question the wisdom of His judgment; He will put you to shame. Do not treat Him negligently; He will bring you to your senses and put you to the test. Do not start innovations in His house; He will destroy you. Do not speak of His religion to suit your own whim; He will ruin you and darken your heart, rob you of your faith and understanding, and make you subject to your devil, your lower self, your passions and desires, your family, your neighbors, your companions, your friends and all the rest of His creatures, even your domestic scorpions, snakes, jinn and other vermin. Thus He will upset your life in this world and prolong your punishment in the hereafter.

Twenty-fourth Discourse

On cleaving to Allāh's door

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Be very wary of disobedience to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and really cleave to His dōor. Devote your energies and your efforts to His obedient service, apologetically and submissively, admitting your shortcomings in all humility, stooping low and keeping your eyes downcast, paying no attention to His creatures and not following your own inclinations, seeking no worldly or otherworldly recompense, nor promotion to high positions and honorable stations. Be fully aware that you are His servant, and that the servant and all he possesses belong to his Master, against whom he has no claim of any kind.

Observe good manners and do not be distrustful of your Master, for "everything with Him is according to measure" (13:8). None can bring forward what He has postponed, and none can put back what He has brought to the fore. You will receive what He has assigned to you at the proper moment and time, like it or not. Do not look forward greedily to what will be yours, and do not hanker after that which belongs to another. Whatever you do not have now, it is surely meant either for you or for somebody else. If it is yours, it will be coming your way, while you are led and directed toward it. The meeting will soon take place. As for that which is not meant for you, you will be deflected from it as it is turned aside from you, so how could the pair of you meet up?

Devote yourself, therefore, to well-mannered behavior in every aspect of your obedient service to your Master (Almighty and Glorious is He), here and now. Do not hold your head high and do not bow your neck to anything apart from Him. Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

Strain not your eyes toward that which We have given for some pairs among them to enjoy—the flower of this world's life, that We may

thereby put them to the test. Your Lord's provision is better and more lasting. (20:131)

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has forbidden you to pay attention to anything outside the situation in which He has placed you. He has equipped you for His obedient service and given you some of His portion, His sustenance and His bounty. He has made you aware that anything beyond this constitutes a temptation, by which He tests people. Cheerful acceptance of your lot is better for you, more lasting, more blessed, more worthy and more appropriate. So let this be your practice, your regular habit, your dwelling place, your underclothing and your overcoat, your wish and your longing, your craving and your desire. You will thereby achieve your every goal, attain to every station, and progress toward all that is good, all that is pleasing and excellent and delightful and precious. Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

No soul knows what comfort is kept secretly in store for them, as a reward for what they used to do. (32:17)

After the five basic religious duties and the forsaking of sins, there is no deed more perfect or greater or more noble or dearer to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and more pleasing in His sight, than what we have been telling you about. May Allāh help us and you to succeed in that which He loves and on which He bestows His gracious favor.

Twenty-fifth Discourse

On the tree of faith

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

O destitute pauper, spurned by the world and its sons, unworthy of mention in royal and ruling circles! You hungry, fainting, naked, gut-thirsty wretch! You vagrant in every corner of the earth, frequenting mosques and vacant lots, driven from every door, shoved away from every object of desire, heart-broken and crushed with total disappointment! Do not say: "Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has impoverished me and alienated the world from me. He has misled me and forsaken me. He hates me. He has disintegrated me and not made me whole. He despises me and does not give me enough to live on in this world. He has made me a nonentity and has not raised my prestige among the public and my own brothers. On another person He has showered abundant blessings, in which he basks by night and day, preferring him over me and the people of my house, despite the fact that both of us are Muslims and Believers, and we both stem from our father Adam and our mother Eve (peace be upon them)."

In your case, Allāh has treated you like this because you have an open nature, and the dew of Allāh's mercy alights on you constantly in the form of patience, contentment, certitude, harmony and knowledge, while the light of faith and pure monotheism is heaped upon you. Thus the tree of your faith, with its root and seed, becomes firmly established, puts forth leaves and fruit, keeps growing and spreading fresh branches, providing shade as it goes on ramifying. Every day it continues to grow and thrive, without needing compost or fertilizer to further its growth and development. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has arranged your affairs along these lines. He has granted you the Abode of Permanence in

the hereafter, and given you the title to it. He has bestowed upon you in the hereafter such gifts as no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard of, and which are inconceivable to the human mind. Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

No soul knows what comfort is kept secretly in store for them, as a reward for what they used to do. (32:17)

That is to say, as a reward for the way they conducted themselves in this world, carrying out commandments, practicing patience in abstaining from forbidden things, accepting the decree of destiny with full surrender and submission to Him, and concurring with Him in all affairs.

As for that other person, to whom Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has granted this world, making it his to own and enjoy, and on whom He has showered His favor, He has treated him like this because the site of his faith is a salt and rocky waste, with hardly enough water to support the growth of trees or to produce crops and fruit. That is why He poured various types of manure upon it, and other things that act as fertilizers for plants and trees, meaning this world and its vanities, to preserve the tree of faith and the seedling of deeds which He had planted there. For if they were deprived of this, the plants and trees would wither, the fruit would go to waste, and the whole countryside would be left desolate, whereas Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) wishes to see it prosper.

Thus the tree of the rich man's faith is weak in growth potential, and lacks the resources available to the tree of your faith, you poor fellow! His tree depends for its nourishment and survival on this world and the various benefits you see him enjoying. If he were deprived of all that, his tree—being so weak—would wither, and the result would be unbelief, denial, and adherence to the hypocrites, apostates and unbelievers. O my God, only if Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) sends that rich man armies of patience, content-

ment, certitude, assistance, knowledge and all kinds of insights, only then will his faith be reinforced. Then of course he will not mind the termination of wealth and blessings.

Allāh is the Guide who helps us to succeed!

Twenty-sixth Discourse

On not unveiling one's face

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Do not remove the veil and head-scarf from your face until you exit from the realm of creatures, and turn the back of your heart on them under all conditions. As your passion ceases, and then your self-will and desire fade away, you pass beyond all forms of existence in this world and the hereafter. You become like a cracked vessel, in that nothing stays inside you except the will of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and so you are filled with Him and His controlling power. "Exit the lie (*zūn*), enter the light (*nūr*)."¹ There is now no room in your heart and no entrance to it except for your Lord. You become the gatekeeper of your heart, and are given the sword of pure monotheism, majesty and might. Whenever you see someone crossing the courtyard of your breast to approach the door of your heart, you strike his head from his shoulder. You will thus have no head to direct your lower self, your passion, your will and your longing in this world and the hereafter, no word that must be heeded, and no opinion to be followed. There is only following the order of the Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), standing by Him and gladly accepting His decision and decree, or rather becoming totally absorbed in His decision and decree. You become the servant of the Lord and His command (Almighty and Glorious is He), and not the servant of creatures and their opinions.

When this becomes the normal pattern for you, the tents of zeal will be pitched around your heart. It will be encircled by the moats of majesty and the authority of might, surrounded by the armies of reality and pure monotheism. In addition to this, guards will be posted by the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), so that creatures cannot gain access to the heart through the devil, the

lower self, the passions, willful impulses and idle longings, false pretensions arising from natural dispositions and evil instincts, and errors stemming from desire.

If it is then the decree of destiny that people should come to you, arriving in succession, following you and adapting themselves to you, to obtain shining light, illuminating signs and profound wisdom, to see manifest gifts of grace and constant works of wonder, and so to increase their capacity for acts of charity, obedience, striving and endurance in the service of their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He); if such be your destiny, you will be protected from them all, and from the tendency of the self to be influenced by its passions, its vanity and pride, its arrogant presumptuousness boosted by such popular acceptance and devoted attention.

Similarly, if you are destined to acquire a fine and beautiful wife, a woman of independent means, you will be protected from her bad influence and spared having to bear her expenses and those of her attendants and relatives. You will experience her as a gift, sufficient, wholesome, pure and free of deceit and malice and spite, of bad temper and of disloyalty in your absence. She will be fully at your disposal, while you are relieved of her upkeep and that of her family and she causes you no painful problems. If she is destined to bear you a child, it will be virtuous, a good offspring pleasing to your eye. Allāh (Exalted is He) has said: "And We set his wife right for him" (21:90). He has also said (Exalted is He):

Our Lord, give us refreshment of our wives and offspring, and make us a model for the righteous. (25:74)

Furthermore He has said (Exalted is He):

And make him, my Lord, well pleasing. (19:6)

Thus all the prayers contained in these Qurānic verses will take effect and be answered in your case, whether or not you actually utter them, for they are relevant here and meant for one who is worthy of them at this stage, who has been confirmed in this rank,

and to whom this measure of favor and closeness has been allotted.

In like manner, if some worldly thing is destined to reach you, it will cause you no harm. Whatever part of it is allotted to you, you are bound to receive it, purified for your sake by the action of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), when the order for its acquisition comes down. You have only to obey the order and you will be rewarded for receiving what is yours, just as you are rewarded for performing the obligatory prayers and keeping the obligatory fast. As for that which is not your portion, you will be ordered to spend it on those to whom it really belongs, namely the deserving poor among friends, neighbors and brethren, and those entitled to shares as the situation may demand. You must examine the circumstances and be discriminating, for going by hearsay is not the same as seeing for oneself. Then you will have this business tidied up and in the clear, rid of dust and confusion, muddle, suspicion and doubt.

Patience, patience! Contentment, contentment! Keeping the state, keeping the state! Restraint, restraint! Calm, calm! Quiet, quiet! Silence, silence! Caution, caution! Escape, escape! Haste, haste! Allāh, Allāh, and again Allāh! Head down, head down! Eyes closed, eyes closed! Modesty, modesty, until the prescript of destiny expires. Then you will be taken by the hand and brought to the fore. You will be relieved of all that weighs upon you, then immersed in the oceans of grace and favor and mercy, then brought out therefrom. Now you will be robed with light and mysteries, knowledge and marvels divine, and then brought near and notified by signs and inspiration /ilbām/, spoken to and given gifts, enriched, encouraged and exalted, and addressed with the words:

You are today in our presence established and worthy of trust.
(12:54)

Now consider how it was for Joseph the Truthful (peace be upon him) when he was addressed with these very words on the tongue of Pharaoh, the great King of Egypt. The King's tongue was giving utterance to the words, but the real speaker was Allāh (Almighty and

Glorious is He), using the tongue of inner knowledge. The King assigned to him the external kingdom, the kingdom of Egypt, but to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) belongs the kingdom of the soul, the kingdom of insight and knowledge, of nearness and special status and high degree. Concerning the kingdom of the king, He says (Exalted is He):

Thus We established Joseph in the land [meaning the land of Egypt], to make his dwelling therein wherever he pleased. We visit with Our mercy whom We will, and We leave not to waste the reward of those who do good. (12:21 / 12:56)

Concerning the kingdom of the soul, He says (Exalted is He):

So it was, that We might ward off from him evil and lewdness; he was one of Our devoted servants. (12:24)

Concerning the kingdom of insight and knowledge, He says (Exalted is He):

This is part of that which my Lord has taught me. I have forsaken the creed of a people who believe not in Allāh and are unbelievers in the Hereafter. (12:37)

When you are thus addressed, O greatest champion of truth [*yā ayyuha s-siddīqu l-akbar*], you are given the most ample share of the most comprehensive knowledge. You are endowed and blessed with help to succeed, with goodness and power, with general saintliness, with effective command over the self and other things, and with the power to bring things into being by God's leave in this world before the hereafter. Then in the hereafter, in the abode of peace and the highest paradise, you will behold the face of the Noble Lord, as a further blessing and favor. That is the goal that has no limit and no end. Only Allāh can help us to achieve the realities of that experience.

Kind and Compassionate is He!

Twenty-seventh Discourse

On good and evil as two fruits

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Regard good and evil as two fruits from two branches of a single tree. One of the two branches bears sweet fruit and the other bitter. You must therefore leave the cities and provinces and regions of the earth which import the fruit gathered from this tree. Keep your distance from them and their inhabitants, and approach the tree itself. Become its steward and resident servant, and make yourself familiar with the two branches, the two fruits and the two sides. Stick to the side of the branch bearing sweet fruit, then you will always get your food and nourishment from it. Avoid going over to the side of the other branch, lest you eat some of its fruit and perish from its bitterness. If you make this your regular habit, you will live in tranquillity, security, comfort and safety from all injuries, because injuries and all kinds of calamities are caused by this fruit.

If you move away from this tree, however, and go wandering far and wide, and then some of these fruits turn up in front of you, mixed together with nothing to distinguish the sweet from the bitter, and you take your pick, your hand may settle on the bitter sort. Then you put it to your mouth, take a bite out of it and chew it, and so the bitterness gets deep into your throat and inside your gullet, into your brain and your nasal passages, affecting you as it flows into your veins and the organs of your body until you die of it. You may spit the remainder out of your mouth and rinse away the traces, but to no avail. This cannot get rid of what has already spread throughout your body, so it will do you no good.

Even if you start by eating some sweet fruit, and its sweetness spreads through all parts of your body to your benefit and delight, you will not be satisfied with this. You are bound to take another fruit, and you cannot be sure that this second one will not be bitter,

with the consequences we have just been telling you about.

There is no good, therefore, in being far from the tree and ignorant of its fruit. Safety lies in getting close to it and staying there. Good and evil result from the working of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). It is Allāh who fashions them both and directs their course. As Allāh (Great and Glorious is He) has said:

Allāh has created you and your handiwork. (37:96)

According to the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

Allāh has created the butcher and the beast he slaughters.

The actions of His servants are created by Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and also what they earn. He says (Exalted is He):

Enter Paradise because of what you used to do. (16:32)

Glory be to Him, how Generous and Merciful is He! He ascribes the work to them, and says they are entitled to enter Paradise because of their deeds, although their success is due to His help and His mercy toward them in this world and the hereafter. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) said: "No one enters Paradise on the strength of his own deeds." Someone asked: "Not even you, O Messenger of Allāh?" He replied: "Not even I, unless Allāh covers me with His mercy," placing his hand on his head as he spoke. This is related in a tradition of 'Ā'isha (may Allāh be well pleased with her).

When you are obedient to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), carrying out His orders, observing His prohibitions and submitting to Him in what He has ordained, He protects you from His evil and bestows His goodness upon you. He protects you from every kind of evil, religious and worldly. As for the worldly side, there is His saying (Exalted is He):

So it was, that We might ward off from him evil and lewdness; he was one of Our devoted servants. (12:24)

On the religious side, we have His saying (Almighty and Glorious is He):

What concern has Allāh for your punishment if you are thankful and believe? Allāh is All-Thankful, All-Knowing. (4:147)

How should tribulation afflict a grateful believer, when he is closer to well-being than to such affliction, because he is so thankful? Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

If you are thankful, I will give you more. (14:7)

Your faith will extinguish the flames of hell-fire in the hereafter, the fire that is the punishment of every sinner, so how can it fail to quench the fire of misfortunes in this world, O my God, unless the servant be one of the ecstasies (*majdhubūn*) chosen for saintship, for special selection and preference? In that case trials are absolutely necessary, as the means by which he is purified of the filth of passion, unworthy natural tendencies, addiction to the desires and pleasures of the lower self, confidence in creatures, liking to be near them, relying on them, feeling secure with them and enjoying their company. He must be tested until all of this melts away, until the heart is cleansed by the departure of it all, so that nothing remains but affirmation of the Oneness of the Lord (*lawhīdu'-rabb*) (Almighty and Glorious is He), intimate knowledge of Him, and the channels of the Unseen, with all kinds of secrets, lore and the light of nearness. For it is a house with no room for two. He says (Exalted is He):

Allāh has not assigned to any man two hearts within his body. (33:4)

He also says (Exalted is He):

Kings, when they enter a township, ruin it and make the noblest of its people the lowest. (27:34)

They evict the nobles from their good positions and their comfortable way of life. Sovereignty over the heart belonged at first to

Satan, to the passions and the lower self. The limbs and organs moved at their command, committing various sins and vanities and hoaxes. But now that sovereignty has passed away, and the limbs and organs are at rest. The house of the King, which is the heart, has been vacated, while the courtyard, which is the breast, has been swept clean. The heart has now become a dwelling for the affirmation of Oneness, insight and knowledge. As for the courtyard, it is the landing ground for receivings and wonders from the Unseen. All this is the result and fruit of trial and tribulation. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has said: "We, the company of Prophets, are the people most severely tried, followed by others according to their levels of perfection." He also said (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "I am the one amongst you who knows Allāh best, and who fears Him the most." Whoever gets close to the King is in grave peril and must be very wary, for he is in the King's view, where his conduct and movements are unconcealed.

Perhaps you will say: "The entire creation in the sight of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is like a single person, with nothing hidden from Him, so what is the point of this statement?"

Well, we respond to you by saying: "When a person holds a high position and his rank is noble, his risk is all the greater, since he is obliged to show gratitude for what He has bestowed upon him, in the shape of enormous blessings and favors. The slightest negligence in serving Him is a dereliction of gratitude to Him, and that is a shortcoming in one's obedience. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

O wives of the Prophet!! Whosoever among you commits a flagrant indecency, the punishment for her will be doubled. (33:30)

He told them that because He (Almighty and Glorious is He) had blessed them so completely through their union with the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace). So how must it be for one who attains to contact with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and

nearness to Him? Allāh is Exalted far above and beyond all comparison with His creation:

There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing. (42:11)

Allāh is the Guide!

Twenty-eighth Discourse

On the classification of the seeker's states

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Do you wish for comfort and joy, tranquillity and happiness, security and trust, well-being and bliss, while you are still under the bellows that melt and smelt, in the process of killing off the lower self, disposing of passion, getting rid of desires and expectations of recompense in this world and the hereafter, and while remnants of these things are very obviously still present in you? Take it easy, O hasty one! Slow and steady, O anticipator! The door to all that is closed while you still have traces on you and a speck inside you. "A slave who is buying his freedom remains a slave as long as he still owes a penny," and you are shut out so long as you still have on you as much of this world as one could suck off a date-stone. This world is your passion, your will, your paying attention to anything at all or seeking anything at all, and your selfish longing for any kind of recompense in this world and the hereafter.

As long as any of this continues to be present in you, you are only at the door of annihilation (*fana*!). So keep calm until that annihilation is fully and perfectly accomplished. You will then be removed from the 'bellows, your goldsmithing will be completed, and you will be polished, attired, anointed and perfumed with incense. Then you will be taken up to the greatest King and addressed with the words:

You are today in our presence established and worthy of trust.
(12:54)

Now you will be kindly and politely entertained, given to eat and drink of gracious favor, made to approach and draw near, and informed of secrets, which will not be concealed from you. Being given all this, you will no longer want for anything.

Have you not noticed the little gold pieces that are distributed, exchanged and circulated, passing to and fro in the hands of perfume vendors and grocers, butchers and tanners, naphtha merchants and sweepers, and people whose crafts are refined or humble, lowly and dirty? Then these pieces of gold are accumulated and exposed to the goldsmith's bellows, where they melt in the heat of the furnace. Next, they are taken out to be hammered, pounded, shaped, and fashioned into jewelry. Having been polished and perfumed, they are then deposited in all the best places, behind locks, in treasures, chests and boxes. The bride will be adorned with them to enhance her beauty and honor, and she may be the bride of the mightiest king. Thus the pieces of gold find their way from those everyday situations into the presence of the king and his court, after being melted down and pounded.

Likewise in your case, O believer! If you bear with patience the experiences you are destined to undergo, if you gladly accept His decree in all conditions, you will be brought near to your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) in this world. You will be blessed with inner and outer knowledge and with secrets, and in the hereafter you will reside in the abode of peace with the Prophets, the champions of truth, the martyrs and the righteous, in the proximity of Allāh and His house, near to Him (Almighty and Glorious is He). Be patient, therefore, and not in a hurry. Be content with the decree of Providence and have no misgivings. You will then receive the solace of Allāh's pardon, His kindness and His generosity, by His gracious favor (Exalted is He).

Twenty-ninth Discourse

On the saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "Poverty is on the verge of slipping into unbelief."

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

The servant believes in Allāh, submits all his affairs to Him (Almighty and Glorious is He), is confident of being provided with sustenance from Him, and is convinced that whatever comes to him could not have missed him, while anything that misses him could not have reached him. He believes in the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

Whoever is dutiful toward Allāh, He prepares a way out for him, and provides for him from sources he could never imagine. And if anyone puts his trust in Allāh, He will suffice him. (65:2,3)

All this he says and believes while he is in a state of well-being and annihilation [*fanā*]. Then Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) puts him to the test through misfortune and poverty, so he takes to pleading and humble entreaty, but He does not relieve him of these afflictions.

Now we see the truth of the Prophet's saying (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "Poverty is on the verge of slipping into unbelief." If Allāh chooses to treat someone gently, He relieves him of his suffering, endows him with well-being and affluence, enables him to offer thanks and praise and glorification, and makes all this last for him until the meeting [with Him in the hereafter]. But when Allāh wishes to try someone, He perpetuates his trial and tribulation and poverty, and deprives him of the support of his faith. Then that person turns unbelieving through insubordination and distrust toward Him (Almighty and Glorious is He) and doubt about His promise, and so dies an unbeliever in Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), denying His signs and feeling angry at his Lord. It is to such a man that Allāh's Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace)

refers in his saying:

The person suffering the harshest torment on the Day of Resurrection will be a man for whom Allāh has combined poverty in this world with chastisement in the hereafter. We take refuge from that with Allāh.

It was from the poverty that makes one forgetful [of Allāh] that the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) was seeking refuge.

As for the other man, he is the one whom Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) wishes to choose and select, whom He has included among His favorites, His friends and His intimates, as heir to His Prophets and chief of His saints, as one of the greatest of His servants and their scholars, sages and intercessors, as their shaikh, master and teacher, as their guide to their Lord, as their director to the path of right guidance and the avoidance of evil ways. To him He sends mountains of patience and oceans of willing acceptance, compliance and contentment with His decree and His working. Then He endows him with gifts aplenty, and pampers him by night and day, in public and in private, sometimes in the open and at other times in secret, with all sorts of kindness and various signs of affection; and all this he continues to enjoy until the moment of the final meeting.

Allāh is the Guide!

Thirtieth Discourse

On not saying "What shall I do and how?"

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

You so often say: "What shall I do, and how shall I manage to do it?" Well, here is your answer: Stay in your place, and do not step beyond your own limit until the opportunity comes to you from the One who has ordered you to stay as you are. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

O you who believe, be patient and excel in patience; be steadfast and observe your duty to Allāh, so that you may succeed. (3:200)

He commands you to be patient, O believer, and to vie in patience, to remain steadfast, to stay on guard and persevere. Then he warns you not to give this up, for He says: "Observe your duty to Allāh [in this respect]," meaning that you must not abandon patience, for that is where goodness and safety lie. In the words of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "Patience is to faith what the head is to the body." It is also said that the reward for everything is a measurable quantity, except the reward for patience, which is an unquantifiable amount. As Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

Those who patiently persevere will receive a reward without measure. (39:10)

When you observe your duty to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), He maintains you in patience and respect for His limits, and grants you fulfillment of what He has promised you in His Book, namely His words (Almighty and Glorious is He):

He who is dutiful toward Allāh, He prepares a way out for him, and provides for him from sources he could never imagine. (65:2,3)

You now stay with your patience until you receive the opportu-

nity of those who put their trust in Him, for Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has promised you sufficiency, saying:

If anyone puts his trust in Allāh, He will suffice him. (65:3)

You stay with your patience and your trust, in the company of those who do good, and for this He has also promised to reward you, saying (Almighty and Glorious is He):

And thus We reward those who do good. (12:22)

Allāh loves you for this, for He says:

Allāh loves those who do good. (5:13)

Thus patience is the source of all goodness and safety in this world and the hereafter. Through it the believer progresses to the state of cheerful acceptance and compliance, then to annihilation [*fanā*] in the workings of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), the state of the *Abdāl* [*badaliyya*] and transcendence [*ghaiba*]. So beware of giving it up, lest it disappoint you in this world and the hereafter and you miss the blessings of both. From this we take refuge with Allāh!

Thirty-first Discourse

On hatred for Allāh's sake

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

When you find in your heart either hatred or love for a person, review his behavior in the light of the Book and the Sunna [the Qurān and the exemplary practice of the Prophet]. If his conduct is hateful according to both these criteria, be happy to be in accord with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and His Messenger. But if his actions are pleasing in their sight, and yet you feel hatred for him, you must realize that you are influenced by passion. You hate him because of your passion, treating him unfairly on account of your loathing for him, and obstinately contradicting Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and His Messenger. So turn to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) in repentance for your hatred, and ask Him to let you feel love for that person, as well as for others dear to Him, His saints and special friends, and the righteous among His servants, so that you may be in harmony with Him (Almighty and Glorious is He).

You should act likewise in the case of someone you love. That is to say, you must review his conduct in the light of the Book and the Sunna. If his behavior is pleasing according to their standards, then love him, but if it is hateful, then hate him, so that you do not love him because of your passion, and do not hate him because of your passion. For you are commanded to oppose your passion. As Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

Follow not desire, lest it lead you astray from Allāh's path. (38:26)

Thirty-second Discourse

On not sharing one's love of Allāh

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

You so often say: "No matter whom or what I love, my love does not last long. Something always comes between us, whether through absence or death or hostility, or, in the case of material objects, through destruction or loss." Well, this may be said to you: Do you not know, O beloved of the Lord of Truth, so cared for and looked after, so jealously watched and guarded, do you not know that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is jealous? He has created you for Himself, and you are yearning to belong to someone other than Him! Have you not heard His words (Almighty and Glorious is He):

He loves them and they love Him... (5:54)

and His words (Exalted is He):

I created the jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me. (51:56)

Have you not heard the saying of the Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "When Allāh loves a servant, He puts him through a trial, and if he is patient, He makes him His own." When someone asked: "O Messenger of Allāh, what is meant by 'He makes him His own'?" he replied: "He leaves him neither wealth nor children." This is because if he had wealth and children he would love them, and his love for his Lord would be diminished and fragmented, since it would be shared between Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and others. But Allāh (Exalted is He) will tolerate no partner, for He is jealous, prevailing over all things and predominant over all things. He therefore destroys and annihilates His 'partner', so that His servant's heart will be His and His alone, with no other

to share it. The truth of His words (Almighty and Glorious is He), "He loves them and they love Him," is now confirmed.

The heart is cleansed at last of all partners and rivals, such as wife, wealth and children, sensual pleasures and cravings, and the ambitious pursuit of positions of authority and leadership, of charismatic powers and spiritual states, stages and stations, heavenly gardens and degrees, proximity and advancement. Since no will or desire remains in the heart, it becomes like a cracked vessel in which no liquid can be contained, for it is broken through the working of Allāh. Whenever any self-will arises there, it is shattered by Allāh's action and His jealousy. Then around it are pitched the tents of dignity and might and awe, and in front of them are dug the moats of majesty and power, so that no willful desire for anything at all can gain access to the heart.

Now the heart can no longer be harmed by any means, not by wealth, not by children, family and friends, nor yet by charismatic gifts, wisdom, knowledge and acts of piety. Since all of this will remain outside the heart, it will not excite the jealousy of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). It will rather be a mark of honor and a kind favor from Allāh to His servant, and a blessing, a provision and a useful benefit for those who come to him, for they will be honored by it, and receive mercy, and because of this gift of grace they will enjoy protection from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). He will therefore be a sentinel for them, a protective wing, a refuge and an intercessor in this world and the hereafter.

Thirty-third Discourse

On the four types of men

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

There are four types of men:

1. A man who has neither tongue nor heart, namely the sinful, gullible fool, to whom Allāh attaches no importance. He is good for nothing, and he and his ilk are dregs that carry no weight, unless Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) extends His mercy to them, and so guides their hearts to faith in Him, moving their limbs and organs in obedience to Him (Almighty and Glorious is He). Beware of being one of them, do not concern yourself with them and do not get involved with them, for they are fit for chastisement, anger and displeasure, the denizens and people of the Fire. From them we take refuge with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

You belong, of course, among the scholars learned in knowledge of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), among the teachers of goodness, the guides, leaders and summoners of religion, so it is your job to go and invite such people to the obedient service of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and to warn them not to sin against Him. You will then be recorded as an adept (*jabbadib*) in Allāh's sight, and will receive the reward of the Messengers and Prophets. As Allāh's Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) once said to the Commander of the Believers, Alī ibn Abī Tālib (may Allāh be well pleased with him): "If Allāh guides one man aright through your guidance, that is better for you than everything on which the sun rises."

2. The second man is one who does have a tongue, but no heart, so that he utters words of wisdom but does not practice what he preaches. He calls people to Allāh, but he himself flees from Him (Almighty and Glorious is He). He deplores the faults of others,

while persisting in similar failings of his own. He makes a public show of piety, while opposing Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) with heinous sins in private, as if he were a wolf in clothes. It is of him the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has warned us in his saying:

What I dread the most for my community comes from every hypocrite with a scholar's tongue.

Or, according to another tradition:

What I dread the most for my community comes from evil scholars.

We take refuge with Allāh from this type! Keep your distance from him, and hurry away lest he snare you with the sweetness of his tongue, for then the fire of his sin will scorch you, and the putrid stench of his inner being and heart will kill you.

3. The third man has a heart, but no tongue. He is a believer whom Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has veiled from His creation, putting a screen around him, letting him see his own faults and enlightening his heart. He has made him aware of the undesirable consequences of mixing with people and the unfortunate results of talk and speech. This man has become convinced that safety lies in silence, retirement and seclusion, heeding the words of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "He who is silent will be saved," as well as the saying of one of the scholars: "There are ten parts to worship, and nine of them are in silence."

This man is a saintly friend of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), protected within Allāh's veil, possessing safety and plenty of intelligence, a companion of the All-Merciful, blessed with His favor. Goodness—all that is good—is with him. It therefore behooves you to befriend him, to associate with him, to serve him, to endear yourself to him by taking care of things he may happen to need, and by providing him with facilities he can use. Then Allāh will love you and choose you, and include you in the company of His friends and

righteous servants, through His grace, if Allah wills (Exalted is He).

4. The fourth man is one who will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven, as it is related in the tradition of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "He who learns and teaches, and puts his learning into practice, will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven." Such is the man who knows Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and His signs. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has stored in his heart the rarities of His knowledge, and has made him privy to secrets He has concealed from others. He has selected him, chosen him, drawn him toward Himself and raised him up, guided him to the door of His nearness, and expanded his breast to receive those secrets and all that knowledge. He has made him an adept, a summoner and a warner to His servants and a living proof in their midst, a rightly guided guide, an intercessor accorded intercession, an honest man and true, a deputy *[bada]* for His Messengers and Prophets (on them be His benedictions, His peace, His salutations and His blessings).

This is the utmost culmination for the sons of Adam. There is no station above this man's station except for Prophethood. Look out for him, then, and beware of opposing him, recoiling from him, shunning him, earning his enmity, failing to win his acceptance and access to his good counsel and advice. For safety lies in what he has to say, and in his presence, while perdition and error lie in the presence of others, except those whom Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) enables to succeed and helps with right guidance and mercy.

Well, I have classified mankind for you. Now you must look at your own self, if you have eyes to see, and handle it carefully, if you regard it with care and compassion. May Allāh guide us, and you, to that which He loves and with which He is well pleased!

Thirty-fourth Discourse

On not resenting Allāh

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

How great is your resentment against your Lord, your suspicion of Him (Almighty and Glorious is He) and your resistance to Him. How often you attribute injustice to Him (Almighty and Glorious is He), and charge Him with delay in providing sustenance and sufficiency and in removing troubles and tribulation. Do you not know that every term has a prescribed duration, and that for every increase in trouble and woe there is an end, a termination and a conclusion, which can neither be brought forward nor deferred? [Until they have run their prescribed course, therefore] times of trials do not change and turn into conditions of well-being, the time of misfortune does not change into prosperity, and the state of poverty is not converted into affluence.

Be well-behaved, practice patience, contentment and harmony with your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and repent for your resentment against Him and your suspicion of Him where His action is concerned. In the Lord's presence there is no room for demanding payment in full and exacting retaliation where there is no offence, nor for recourse to natural instinct, as is usual in mutual relations between His servants. He (Almighty and Glorious is He) is absolutely alone from all eternity, existing before all things. He created them, and He created their benefits and disadvantages. He knows their beginning, their end and their fulfillment. He (Almighty and Glorious is He) is wise in His working and sure in His craftsmanship. There is no inconsistency in what He does. He does nothing uselessly and creates nothing as a futile game. There can be no question of criticizing or reproaching Him for His deeds.

You should therefore wait for relief, if you are too weak to comply with Him and to submit to His action gladly, until the prescript of

destiny expires. Then the situation will yield to its opposite with the passage of time and the consummation of the course of events, as winter runs its course and yields to summer, and as night comes to an end and yields to day. If you ask for the light of day between the first two watches of the night, it will not be given to you. Indeed, the night will get even darker, until the darkness reaches its climax, then dawn breaks and the day comes with its light, whether you ask for this and want it, or say nothing about it and even dislike it. Should you now ask for the night to be brought back, your request will go unanswered and you will not get what you want, because you have asked for something at the wrong moment and time. You will therefore be left sorry, deprived, resentful and disappointed. So give all this up and practice compliance, thinking well of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and graceful patience. For what is yours will not be snatched from you, and what is not yours will not be given to you. By my life, you pray and make supplication to your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), offering humble entreaties as an act of worship and obedience in keeping with His commandment (Exalted is He): "Call upon Me and I will answer you" (40:60), and His words (Exalted is He): "Ask Allāh of His bounty" (4:32), as well as other verses and traditions. You pray, and He will answer you at the appropriate moment and appointed time, when He wills, when it is to your advantage in this world and the hereafter, and when it coincides with His decree and the end of the term set by Him.

Do not become suspicious of Him when He delays the response, and do not weary of making supplication to Him, for while you may not be gaining, neither are you losing. If He does not respond to you immediately, He will reward you later on. According to an authentic tradition, the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) said: "On the Day of Resurrection the servant will see in his records some good deeds which he does not recognize. He will then be told that these are compensation for requests he made in this world, but

which were not destined to be fulfilled therein," or something to that effect. Well then, the least of your spiritual states is that you should be remembering your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), affirming His Oneness, inasmuch as you address your requests to Him and not to any other than Him, and do not submit your need to anyone but Him (Exalted is He). You are in one or the other of two conditions at all times, by night and by day, in health and in sickness, in adversity and in prosperity, in hardship and in ease:

1. You refrain from asking, gladly accept the decree of destiny, reconcile yourself and go along with His action (Almighty and Glorious is He) in a relaxed fashion, like a corpse in front of the ritual washer of the dead, like a suckling babe in its nurse's arms, or like a ball waiting for the polo-player to knock it around with his mallet. Destiny will then turn you about as it wishes. If it happens to be a blessing, thanks and praise are forthcoming from you, and from Him (Almighty and Glorious is He) comes increase in the gift. As He has said (Exalted is He): "If you are thankful, I will give you more" (14:7). If it is an adversity, however, you respond with patience and compliance, through His help, while from His side (Almighty and Glorious is He) come reassurance, support, blessing and mercy, through His favor and generosity. As He says (Almighty and Glorious is He): "Allāh is with those who patiently persevere" (2:153). That is to say, through His support and reassurance, since He is supportive of His servant against his lower self, his passion and his devil. He says (Exalted is He):

If you help Allāh, He will help you and make your foothold firm.
(47:7)

When you help Allāh by opposing your own self and your passion by giving up resistance to Him and resentment of His action within you, when you become an enemy and an executioner to your lower self for Allāh's sake, so that whenever it moves with its unbelief and polytheism you behead it with your patience, your compliance with

your Lord and your satisfaction with His working and His promise, and your contentment with them both, then Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will be a helper to you. As for blessing and mercy, consider His words (Almighty and Glorious is He):

And give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere, who say, when a misfortune strikes them: "To Allāh we belong, and to Him we are returning." Such are they on whom are blessings from their Lord, and mercy. Such are the rightly guided. (2:155–157)

2. The other condition is that in which you make supplication to your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) with prayer and humble entreaty, honoring His majesty and obeying His commandment. Now things are where they truly belong, for He has urged you to put your requests to Him and to resort to Him, and has made that a comfort for you, a messenger from you to Him, a contact and means of access to Him, provided that you give up suspicion and resentment toward Him in the event of postponement of the answer to your prayer until the time appropriate.

Take note of the difference between the two conditions, and do not be one of those who overstep the bounds of both, because there is no other condition besides these two. Beware of being among the wrong-doing transgressors, for He will then destroy you (Almighty and Glorious is He) without caring, as He has destroyed former peoples in times past, by intensifying His affliction in this world and by His painful torment in the hereafter.

Thirty-fifth Discourse

On pious caution [al-wara']

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Besure to behave with pious caution, otherwise you are doomed to destruction in the bloom of your youth! You will never escape it unless Allāh (Exalted is He) covers you with His mercy. According to an authentic tradition, the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) is reported as saying: "The foundation of religion is pious caution, and its destruction is greed. Anyone who hovers around a forbidden zone is liable to drop into it, just as an animal grazing next to a corn field is liable to stretch its mouth toward it, so the crops are hardly safe from the beast."

Of Abū Bakr as-Şiddīq (may Allāh be well pleased with him) it is related that he once said: "We used to avoid seventy doors of the permissible (*mubāḥ*), for fear of falling into sin (*junāḥ*)," while the Commander of the Believers, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allāh be well pleased with him) is reported to have said: "We used to abstain from nine tenths of the lawful (*halāl*), for fear of falling into the unlawful (*haram*)."

They acted like that as a precaution against getting too close to what is unlawful, heeding the words of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "Every king has a forbidden zone and Allāh's forbidden zone is that of His unlawful things. Anyone who hovers around that zone is liable to drop into it."

Anyone who enters the king's fortress, passing through the first gate, then the second and the third until he approaches the threshold, is better than one who stops at the first gate, which is next to open country. For if the lock of the third gate is shut against him, it will not harm him, since he is already behind two of the palace gates and has the king's guards and troops close by him. If he stands at the first gate, however, and they shut him out of it, he is left alone

in open country, where he may fall a prey to wolves and enemies and become one of those who perish.

Likewise in the case of one who treads the path of strict observance and sticks to it: If he is robbed and deprived of the support of helpful influence and providential care, he can avail himself of dispensations without going outside the sacred law. When death overtakes him, he will be in a state of worship and obedience, and his good conduct will be adduced as evidence in his favor.

As for one who stops at the dispensations and does not go forward to strict observance, if he is robbed of helpful influence and deprived of its support, and so falls under the control of passion and the desires of the lower self, then indulges in forbidden things, he goes outside the sacred law and joins the company of devils, enemies of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) who stray from the path of right guidance. So if death overtakes him before repentance, he will be one of those who perish, unless Allāh (Exalted is He) covers him with His mercy and His favor. There is danger, then, in relying on dispensations. All safety lies wholly in strict observance.

Allāh is the Guide to the straight path!

Thirty-sixth Discourse

*On the explanation of this world and the hereafter,
and what one must do in them both*

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Treat your life hereafter as your capital and your worldly life as the profit therefrom. Spend your time first of all on acquiring your life hereafter, then if you have any time to spare, spend it on your worldly life and on seeking your livelihood. Do not treat your worldly life as your capital and your life hereafter as its profit, and then spend only such time as you have to spare on your life hereafter, performing your prayers as if casting them all in a single mold, with the basic elements omitted, with necessary ingredients in the wrong order, without the bowing and prostration and without quiet pause between the essential stages, or perhaps getting weary and fatigued so that you fall asleep without completing the whole ritual, like a corpse by night and an idler by day, following your lower self, your passions and your devil, trading your life hereafter for worldly life as the slave of your lower self, as its mount and riding beast.

You are commanded to ride your lower self, to discipline and train it, and to use it to carry you along the path of safety, the way of the hereafter and of obedience to our Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). So you have wronged it by submitting to it, giving it free rein and going along with it in pursuit of its carnal desires and pleasures, adapting yourself to it and its devil and its passions, with the result that you have missed the good of this world and the hereafter and incurred loss in both domains. You enter on the Day of Resurrection as the most bankrupt of men and the biggest loser among them in both the religious and the worldly sense. You do not attain, by following it, to more than your allotted share in your worldly life, whereas, if you went the route of the hereafter and made it your

capital, you would make a profit in both this world and in the life hereafter. You would receive your share of worldly goods, and be welcome to them, while enjoying security and respect. As the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has said: "Allāh grants this world on the strength of otherworldly intention, but he does not grant the hereafter on the strength of worldly intention." How could it not be so, when otherworldly intention is obedience to Allāh? Intention is the very spirit and essence of all forms of worship.

When you obey Allāh through your abstemiousness in this world or your quest for the abode of the hereafter, you become one of the favorites of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), one of the people devoted to obedient service and love of Him. You gain the hereafter, namely paradise and nearness to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), as well as the subservient support of this world, of which you will receive your allotted share, since everything is subject to its Creator and Lord; to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

When, on the other hand, you are preoccupied with this world and turn away from the hereafter, the Lord becomes angry with you. You lose the hereafter, and this world gives you problems, difficulty and trouble in getting your share transmitted to you, because of Allāh's anger (Almighty and Glorious is He) toward you. Since it is owned by Him, this world humiliates those who rebel against Him and honors those who obey Him, thus confirming the truth of the Prophet's words (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "This world and the hereafter are two co-wives; if you please either one of them the other gets annoyed at you."

Allāh (Exalted is He) has said: "Some of you desire this world, and some desire the hereafter" (3:152), meaning the children of this world and the children of the hereafter respectively. So look and see: In which of these two sets of children are you included? To which of the two tribes would you like to belong while you are in this world? Then, when you pass on to the hereafter, there will be

two groups of people, one group wanting this world, and one group wanting the hereafter. There will be two groups also on the Day of Resurrection: "A party in Paradise, and a party in the Blazing Fire" (42:7). One party will be standing on the spot throughout the reckoning on a Day equivalent to fifty thousand years as you count time, according to His word (Exalted is He). Another party will be in the shadow of the Throne, as reported by the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "You will be on the Day of Resurrection in the shadow of the Throne, busy at tables laden with delicious food and fruits and honey whiter than snow." According to the tradition also: "They will behold their dwellings in Paradise until, when He has finished with the people's reckoning, they enter Paradise, finding the right way to their dwellings as a person in this world finds his way home."

Would they attain to this except by forsaking this world and engaging in the quest for the hereafter and the Lord? And would those others have to undergo the reckoning and all kinds of agonies and degradation, but for their involvement in this world and their fondness for it, their indifference toward the hereafter and their scant concern for its demands, their forgetfulness of the Day of Resurrection and what they must come to on the morrow, as mentioned in the Book and Sunna? So look at your own self with a look of mercy and compassion, and choose for its sake the better of those two tribes. Keep it away from bad company, from devils among men and jinn. Hold the Book and the Sunna before you, look into them and act upon them, and do not be deceived by idle talk and fantasy. Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it. Whatever he forbids you, abstain from it. And keep your duty to Allāh. (59:7)

Do not oppose him by ceasing to act on what he has brought, inventing a practice and a form of worship to suit yourselves, as Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) says concerning a people who have strayed from the right path:

But monasticism they invented; We did not prescribe it for them. (57:27)

Moreover, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has purified His Prophet and kept him away from falsehood and lies, for He says:

Nor does he speak from his own desire. It is naught but an inspiration that is inspired. (53:3,4)

In other words: "Whatever he has brought you, it comes from Me and not from his desire and his own self, so follow it."

Then He says (Exalted is He):

Say: "If you love Allāh, follow me; Allāh will love you." (3:31)

He has thus made it clear that the way of love means following him in word and deed, for the Prophet (blessing and peace be upon him) has said: "Earning is my exemplary practice, and absolute trust is my state," or words to that effect. You are therefore between his practice and his state. If your faith is weak you should go for earning, which is his practice, and if your faith is strong you should opt for his state, which is absolute trust. Allāh (Exalted is He) says:

So put all your trust in Allāh, if you are believers, (5:23)

and He says (Exalted is He):

If anyone puts his trust in Allāh, He will suffice him. (65:3)

He also says (Exalted is He):

Allāh loves those who put their trust in Him. (3:159)

Thus He has commanded you to trust Him completely and has reminded you to do so, as He has commanded His Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) in His words: "And trust in Allāh" (8:61). So follow the orders of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) by asking him about your deeds, otherwise they will be rejected. As the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has said: "If anyone does a deed without our authority for it, it will be rejected." This covers the search for livelihood, actions and words. We have no Prophet other than him, so let us follow him, and no Book apart

from the Qur'ān, so let us act upon it. Your desires and the devil will only lead you astray. As Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

Follow not desire, lest it lead you astray from Allāh's path. (38:26)

Safety comes with the Book and the Sunna, and perdition with all but these two. Through them the servant progresses to the state of *Wilāya* [saintship], *Badaliyya* and *Ghawthiyya*.

Only Allāh is All-Knowing!

Thirty-seventh Discourse

On censure of envy

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Why, O believer, do I see you envying your neighbor his food and his drink, his clothes, his wife, his home, his enjoyment of his wealth and the blessings of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) and the portion allotted to him? Do you not realize that this is the kind of thing that weakens your faith, causes you to fall from the sight of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and makes you hateful to Him? Have you not heard the tradition handed down from the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), according to which Allāh (Exalted is He) told him among other things: "The envier is the enemy of My blessing"? Have you not heard that the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) also said: "Envy devours good deeds as fire consumes wood"?

What really makes you envious of him, you poor wretch? Is it his lot or your own? If you envy him his share, which Allāh has allotted to him in accordance with His words: "We have apportioned among them their livelihood in the life of this world" (43:32), then you are unfair to the man, who is merely enjoying his Lord's blessing, which He has graciously bestowed upon him and assigned to him by decree, and in which He has given no one else any part or portion. So who could be more unjust, greedier, sillier and less reasonable than you?

If, on the other hand, you envy him your own share, then you betray the utmost ignorance, because your share will not be given to anyone but you, and will not be transferred from you to any other. Far be it from Allāh [to do so]! As Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

The Word is not changed with Me; I am no tyrant to the servants. (50:29)

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is not so unjust to you that He would take away what He has allotted you and give it to someone else! The very idea betrays your ignorance and unfairness to your brother. It would make better sense for you to be envious of the earth, which is a storehouse of treasures and hoards of all kinds of gold and silver and precious stones, amassed by the ancient kings of 'Ād and Thamūd, by Chosroes and Caesar, rather than to envy your neighbor, be he a believer or an immoral type. For whatever he has in his house cannot amount to even a millionth part of what the earth contains.

Your envy of your neighbor invites the following comparison: A man sees a king with all his might, his armies and his entourage, his possession and control of vast estates, from which he collects taxes and exploits the revenue. He sees the king enjoying all kinds of luxuries, pleasures and gratifications, but he does not envy him any of this. Then he sees a dog acting as servant to one of the king's dogs, standing, squatting, barking, and being given leftovers and scraps of food from the royal kitchen, on which he subsists. The man starts to envy this dog, becomes hostile toward it, wishes death and destruction upon it and wants to take its place, for mean and petty reasons, not in a spirit of asceticism, religious piety and humble contentment. Was there ever a man more foolish, stupid and ignorant?

Furthermore, you poor wretch, if you only knew what a lengthy reckoning your neighbor will have to undergo on the coming Day of Resurrection! If he has not been obedient to Allāh in respect of all the benefits He has granted him, if he has not discharged his obligations where these are concerned, by obeying His commandments and observing His prohibitions as they might apply, and using his advantages in support of His service and obedience to Him, how he will wish that he had never been given a single atom of it all, that he had not seen a single blessing on any day ever! Have you not heard the words of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give

him peace) as they have come down to us in the tradition: "There will be groups of people who will surely be wishing, on the Day of Resurrection, that their flesh might be cut away with scissors, in view of the reward they see given to those who have borne misfortune."

Your neighbor will therefore come to wish he had been in your place in this world, in view of the lengthy reckoning and interrogation he must undergo, and his having to stand in the heat of the sun for fifty thousand years at the Resurrection, on account of the comfort he enjoyed in this world, while you are at a distance from all this, in the shade of the Throne, eating and drinking, enjoying yourself, cheerful, happy and relaxed, on account of your patient endurance of worldly hardships, constraints, troubles, suffering and poverty, your contentment and readiness to comply with your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) when His plan and decision meant poverty for you and affluence for others, sickness for you and good health for others, hardship for you and ease for others, humiliation for you and honor for others. May Allāh include us, and you, among those who bear misfortune with patience, who give thanks for blessings, and who entrust their affairs to the Lord of heaven!

Thirty-eighth Discourse

On honesty [ṣidq] and sincerity [niṣāḥ]

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

When someone relates to his Lord with honesty and sincerity, he feels aversion for all besides Him by night and by day. O people, do not lay claim to that which is not yours. Affirm the Oneness of Allāh and associate nothing with Him. By Allāh, the arrows of destiny will then scratch and not kill when they strike you. But if anyone perishes for Allāh's sake, Allāh owes him his compensation.

Thirty-ninth Discourse

On dissension, concord and hypocrisy [nifāq]

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

To take when desire is present, without being ordered to do so, is obstinacy and dissension. Taking when desire is absent is concord and agreement, while refraining from it then is innovation and hypocrisy.

Fortieth Discourse

*On when the aspirant truly belongs in the company
of spiritual people*

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Do not expect to enter the company of spiritual people until you become hostile to your whole self, until you separate from all the limbs and organs of your body, and become detached from your being, your motions and stillnesses, your hearing and seeing, your speech, your strength and effort, your work and your intellect, from everything that was part of you before the existence of the spirit within you and what was brought into being within you after the in-breathing of the spirit. All of this is a veil between you and your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), so only then will you become an independent spirit, the secret of the secret, the unseen of the unseen, separate in your secret from all things, regarding everything as an enemy, a barrier and darkness. So said Abraham, the Lord's dear friend (on him be peace):

They are enemies to me, except the Lord of the Worlds. (26:77)

He was referring to idols, but then you should treat your whole being and all its parts as idols, together with the rest of creation, and must neither obey any of them individually nor follow them as a whole. You will then be entrusted with secrets, with esoteric knowledge and its rarities. You will be endowed with creative force and ability to transcend the natural order, powers of the type that will belong to the believers in Paradise.

In this condition, you will be as if restored to life after death in the hereafter. Your entire being will be Power [*qudra*], and you will hear through Allāh, speak through Allāh, see through Allāh, hold through Allāh, move through Allāh, understand through Allāh, and find rest and repose in Allāh, for you will be blind and deaf to all

besides Him. You will then see nothing as having any existence apart from Him, as long as you observe the limits, the commandments and prohibitions of the sacred law. Should there be within you any infringement of these limits, you must know that you are being tempted, that the devils are having fun with you. You must return to the rule of the sacred law and forsake fanciful ideas, because every "true fact" not confirmed by the law of Islam is atheistic heresy.

Only Allāh is All-Knowing!

Forty-first Discourse

Illustrating the nature of annihilation [fanā']

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

We shall use a parable to explain annihilation to you, so please imagine the following: A king takes an ordinary man and makes him governor of a certain district, investing him with robes of office, hoisting flags and banners in his honor, and furnishing him with ceremonial goblets, with drums and with soldiers. Our man is maintained in this state for a period of time, long enough for him to get accustomed to it and feel sure that it will continue on a permanent basis, so he becomes complacent about it, forgets his former condition of inferiority, insignificance, poverty and obscurity, and is seized with arrogance and pride. At this point he receives an order from the king, dismissing him because of his gross misconduct. Then the king calls him to account for the crimes he has perpetrated in transgression of the royal commands and prohibitions, and confines him to the tightest and strictest of all the jails. His prison term is long, and the man undergoes protracted suffering, humiliation and poverty, through which his arrogance and pride melt away, his lower self is broken, and the fire of his passion is extinguished. All of this has been happening in the sight of the king, who now takes pity on the man and views him with compassion and mercy. He commands that he be released from prison and treated well, that he receive a robe of honor and have his governorship restored to him, with another such position added. All this he grants him by an act of pure liberality, and the man continues to enjoy the situation as it remains serene, adequate and wholesome.

Likewise in the case of the believer, when Allāh draws him close and selects him, He opens before the eye of his heart the gate of mercy, grace and favor, so he sees with his heart what no eye ever saw, no ear ever heard of, and no human heart ever conceived:

Insight into the unseen realms of the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, close companionship, pleasant and gentle speech, a beautiful promise and its fulfillment, acceptance of prayer, words of wisdom and the verification of promise. All this is cast into his heart from a place far off, and then becomes manifest on his tongue. He also confers abundant outward blessings upon him, on his body and its limbs and organs, in the shape of food and drink, clothing, marriage, things lawful and permissible, and observance of the limits and the outer forms of worship. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) makes this last for a period of time for His believing, enraptured servant, until the servant becomes accustomed to it and deceives himself into believing it will go on forever. Then He opens upon him the gates of tribulation and all kinds of trials affecting his person, his property, his wife and children, and his heart, so that he is deprived of everything Allāh had previously blessed him with, and is left bewildered, lost, broken and in despair."

If he looks at his outer life, it all seems bad for him, while if he looks at his heart and his inner life, he is saddened by what he sees. If he asks Allāh (Exalted is He) to remove his suffering, he does not see his petition answered. If he wishes for a beautiful promise, he does not find it promptly, and if he is promised something he does not encounter its fulfillment. If he has a dream, he does not succeed in interpreting it and confirming its truth. If he wants to renew his contact with people, he finds no way of doing so. If this seems to offer him a dispensation, and he acts accordingly, punishments come rushing toward him, while people assault his body with their hands and his reputation with their tongues. If he seeks cancellation of everything he got involved in since his former condition prior to his selection, it will not be cancelled. If he seeks contentment or cheerful acceptance in the midst of his misfortune, not even this will be granted.

It is now that the self begins to melt, passion fades away, will and desires depart, and all entities vanish into naught. This process not

only persists, but grows more intense, acute and emphatic, until, when the servant passes beyond human characteristics and attributes, and remains as spirit only, he hears an inner voice calling: "Stamp your foot! Here is a cool washing place, and a drink" (38:42), as it was said to our master Job (peace be upon him). Then Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) pours into his heart the oceans of His mercy, compassion, tenderness and grace, revives him with His spirit, delights him with His understanding and the subtleties of His knowledge, opens for him the gates of His mercy, favor and lavish care, releases people's hands to offer him presents, gifts and service in all conditions, their tongues to offer praise and commendation and acclaim in all situations, and their feet to move [in his service]. He makes kings and chieftains humbly subservient to him. He showers him with blessings outwardly and inwardly.

He completes his outer development through His creatures and His bounties, while attending to his inner training directly through His kindness and noble generosity, and He makes this continue for him till the final meeting. Then He lets him enter into that which no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard of, and which never occurred to the human heart. As Allāh (Glorious and Exalted is He) has said: ·

No soul knows what comfort is kept secretly in store for them, as a reward for what they used to do. (32:17)

Forty-second Discourse

On the two conditions of the self [nafs]

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

The self /*nafs*/ has two conditions and no third: The state of well-being and the state of tribulation. When it is undergoing tribulation, the signs are anxiety, complaining, resentment, protest and suspicion toward the Lord of Truth (Glorious and Exalted is He), and lack of patience, contentment and compliance. Indeed, there is likely to be ill-mannered behavior, the association of creatures and material objects with the Creator, and unbelief. When, on the other hand, it is in the state of well-being, the signs are greed, impetuosity, and the pursuit of carnal lusts and pleasures. As soon as it gratifies one desire, it goes after another, belittling the blessings it already possesses, such as food, drink, clothing, spouse, dwelling and means of transport. It finds faults and defects in each one of these blessings, wanting something superior and finer that is not part of its destined lot, while shunning what has been allotted to it. Thus the person gets into all kinds of trouble, and wades into many perils in a long and weary process that has no end or termination in either this world or the hereafter. As the saying goes: "Truly the harshest of punishments is the desire to have what is not one's allotted share."

When the self is undergoing tribulation, it wishes only to see it removed, forgetting all about enjoyment, lust and pleasure, and wanting none of them. Once relieved of suffering, however, it reverts to its frivolity, greed and impetuosity, to its recalcitrant disobedience of its Lord and its dedication to sinful rebellion against Him. It forgets all the trouble and pain, all the misfortune it went through previously. Now it is afflicted with even harsher trials and tribulations, because of the major sins it has perpetrated and committed, to wean it away from these and to restrain it from sinful

acts in future, since well-being and comfort had failed to reform it, and its safekeeping lay rather in tribulation and pain.

If the self had behaved itself well when the affliction was removed, and had practiced obedience, gratitude and contentment with its lot, things would have been better for it in this world and the hereafter. It would have experienced increasing comfort, well-being, approval from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), pleasure, and help toward success.

Anyone who wishes for safety in this world and the hereafter must therefore cultivate patience and contentment. He must give up complaining to people, submit his needs to his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), practice obedience to Him, wait for happiness to come from Him, and be devoted exclusively to Him (Almighty and Glorious is He), since He is better than any other and than His entire creation. His deprivation is actually a gift, His punishment a blessing, His trial a remedy, His promise ready cash, His word a deed, His will a state of being. Surely His word "and His command when He intends a thing, is to say to it 'Be,' and it is" (36:82). All His deeds are good and wise and beneficial, although He keeps knowledge of the benefits concealed from His servants and reserves it to Himself alone. For His servants, therefore, it is most fitting and proper to be in a state of contentment and submission, to be dedicated to servanthood by fulfilling commandments, observing prohibitions, and submitting to the decree of destiny, to abandon preoccupation and combat with Lordship, which is the source of destiny's decrees, to be silent on questions of why and how and when, and to give up suspicion of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) in all His phases of movement and repose.

All of this rests on the authority of the ḥadīth of Ibn 'Abbās (may Allāh be well pleased with him and his father), from whom it is transmitted by 'Atā'. Ibn 'Abbās said: "I was riding behind the Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) when he said to me: 'My boy, take care of Allāh and He will take care of you. Take

care of Allāh and you will find Him in front of you. So when you have something to ask, ask Allāh, and when you seek help, seek help from Allāh. The pen has already run dry from writing all that is to be, so if His servants were to strive to bring you some benefit not decreed for you by Allāh, they would not be capable of it, and if His servants were to strive to cause you some injury not decreed for you by Allāh, they would not be able to do it. So if you can relate to Allāh with honesty and certitude [*yaqīn*], do so; and if you cannot, there is much good in being patient with what you dislike. Know that help resides in patience, joy with sorrow, and "with hardship comes ease" (94:5)."

It behooves every believer to make this ḥadīth a mirror for his heart, to wear it as his undergarment and his outer garb, to treat it as his own ḥadīth, on which he should act in all conditions, be he in motion or at rest, so that he may be safe in this world and the hereafter, and receive honor in both domains through the mercy of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Forty-third Discourse

On censure of asking from any but Allāh

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Anyone who asks of people, does so only because of his ignorance of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), because of the weakness of his faith, his understanding and his certitude, and through his lack of patience. Whoever refrains therefrom, on the other hand, does so only because of his abundant knowledge of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), because of the strength of his faith and his certitude, because his understanding of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) is increasing every day and every moment, and because of his modesty before Him (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Forty-fourth Discourse

*On the reason for non-response to the supplication of one
who knows Allāh [al-ārif bi'llāh]*

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

The knower [of Allāh] does not receive an answer whenever he makes a request of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), nor is every promise redeemed for him, lest he get carried away with hopeful expectation and come to his ruin. For there is no state or station that does not have its complement of fear and hope. These two are a pair, like the wings of a bird, without which faith cannot be complete, and the same goes for each spiritual state (*bāla*) and station (*magām*), allowing for the fact that the fear and the hope will be appropriate to any given state.

Since the knower [*ārif*] is brought close to the presence of the Lord, his state and station are such that he may not wish for anything but his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), may not have confidence or assurance in any but Him (Almighty and Glorious is He), and may not be on intimate terms with any other. It is not fitting for him, therefore, nor in keeping with his state, to expect acceptance of his request and fulfillment of his covenant.

There are two factors to be considered here: One is that he should not get carried away by over-optimism and inattentiveness through the cunning tricks of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), so that he comes to ruin by neglecting to maintain the proper standards of behavior. The second is that he runs the risk of associating something else with his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), because there is obviously no sinless person in the world aside from the Prophets (on them all, as on our own Prophet, be the most excellent blessing and peace).

This explains why He does not always respond to the *Ārif* and grant him fulfillment, so that he will not ask merely from habit or

prompted by natural instinct, rather than by obedience to received instructions. For that smacks of sinful association, and to associate anything with the Lord is a major sin in every state, at every step and all stations without exception. ;

Where the request is made in compliance with an order, however, it is something that brings him even closer to the Lord, like prayer, fasting and other obligatory and supererogatory devotions, for in this case he is obediently following the commandment.

Forty-fifth Discourse

On blessings and trials

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

There are two kinds of people: Those who are blessed with good fortune, and those who are tried by what their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) has decreed.

As for the fortunate ones, they are not exempt from all vexation and annoyance in the enjoyment of their blessings. Such a person may be very comfortable indeed, when along comes destiny to distress him with various afflictions, like diseases, ailments and disasters affecting himself, his property, his family and his offspring, which ought to teach him a lesson. It seems to him now as if he had never been favored, and he forgets that good fortune and how sweet it was. Yet as long as the rich man is secure in his wealth and position, with male and female servants and safety from enemies, he is in a state of bliss as if trouble did not exist.

All this is due to his ignorance of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). If he knew that his Lord "is Doer of what He will" (11:107), and that He changes and transforms, sweetens and embitters, enriches and impoverishes, exalts and abases, honors and humbles, gives life and causes death, brings forward and puts back, why would he be complacent about his good fortune, why would he be deluded by it, and why would he despair of happy relief while in the state of affliction? The problem is also due to his ignorance of this world, where he felt secure, and expected to find a serenity uncontaminated by grief, forgetting that it is the abode of trouble and distress, of bother and worry, that trouble is its norm and comfort only incidental to it. This world is like the aloe tree, the first fruit of which is bitter, while the last is sweet as honey. No man can get at its sweetness till he has swallowed the bitterness of it, so he will never reach the honey without enduring the bitter taste with

patience. Anyone who bears its trials patiently will eventually savor its blessings.

The laborer is given his hire only after the sweat of his brow, the exhaustion of his body, the agony of his spirit, the constriction of his breast, the loss of his strength, the humbling of his selfish nature, and the breaking of his passions, all in the service of a creature like himself. Only when he has swallowed all these bitter pills will he finally enjoy good food, tidbits and fruit, fine clothes, comfort and happiness, if only in very small measure.

What the world has to offer, then, is bitter at first, just as the top layer of honey in a jar is marred by a bitter taste, and the eater cannot reach the bottom of the pot to get at the pure part until after he has taken the top layer. Thus if the servant perseveres in performing the Lord's commandments (Almighty and Glorious is He) and observing His prohibitions, and in submitting with complete trust to the course of destiny *Iqadar*, and if he swallows all the bitterness and bears all the burdens involved, opposing his passions and giving up his self-willed desires, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will reward him with a pleasant existence in later life, with lavish care, comfort and dignity. The Lord will become his guardian and nourish him, just as He nourishes the suckling babe, without his having to worry or bear any trouble and strain in this world and the hereafter, so he will be like the person who relishes the honey at the bottom of the jar, after eating the bitter layer on top.

The servant who is blessed with good fortune must therefore never feel secure from the cunning tests of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), deluding himself into believing that his prosperity is bound to last forever, forgetting to be thankful for it, and letting it slip loose by omitting that gratitude. As the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has said: "Good fortune is a wild beast, so tie it up with gratitude." Thanks for the blessing of wealth are offered by acknowledging the gracious benefactor, namely Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), by telling oneself about it under all

circumstances, by recognizing His favor and grace. The servant must not put himself above his Lord, nor transgress the limits He imposes, nor fail to observe His commandments in the matter. Gratitude is then further shown by discharging one's duties in respect of the alms-due, expiation, votive offerings and charitable donations, by helping the distressed, visiting the needy and those who are in dire straits through the vicissitudes of circumstance and reversal of fortune from good to bad, meaning that times of prosperity and plenty have given way to wretchedness and misery. Gratitude for good health in the limbs and organs of the body is shown by enlisting their aid for works of obedience, and refraining from unlawful actions, bad deeds, sins and offenses.

This is how to keep blessings from roaming and wandering off, how to water their tree and encourage the growth of its branches and leaves, ensuring that it bears good fruit, sweet to the taste and wholesome to digest, delicious to chew and easy to swallow, contributing to the health and development of the body. Then its beneficial effect on the limbs and organs will become manifest through various acts of obedience, good works and invocations of remembrance. As a result of all this, the servant will then enter in the hereafter into the mercy of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and abide forever in the gardens of Paradise together with "the Prophets and the champions of truth, the martyrs and the righteous; the best of company are they!" (4:69).

If the servant does not act like this, however, if he allows himself to be deluded by the superficial glamor of this world and by the taste he gets of its pleasures, if he is content with the brilliance of its phantom show and lightning flashes, with its early morning breeze on a hot summer's day, with the smoothness of the skins of its snakes and scorpions, if he is forgetful and blind to the deadly poisons lurking in its depths, to the pitfalls and traps it has set to catch and ensnare and destroy him, then he should be given a welcome to perdition and rejoice in rapidly impending ruin and

destitution, with humiliation and scorn in this world and torment to come in the fire and flame of Hell.

As for one who suffers tribulation, he will sometimes be tried as a punishment and retribution for an offense he has perpetrated or a sin he has committed, at another time as an expiation and purification, and finally, for the sake of elevation in spiritual degrees and advancement to high stages, to join those versed in knowledge, people with experience of all states and stations. This they have received through the providence of the Lord of creation and of mankind. Their Lord has sent them to ride the fields of misfortune on the mounts of friendliness and kindness, and refreshed them with the breeze of loving looks and glances while in movement or at rest, because their trial was not intended to destroy them and hurl them into the abyss. Rather did He put them to these tests for the sake of choice and selection, so drawing from them the reality of faith, which He purified and separated from polytheistic association *[shirk]*, pretensions and hypocrisy *[nifāq]*, and presenting them with all kinds of knowledge, secrets and enlightenment. Then He made special favorites of them, entrusted them with His secrets, and granted them the pleasure of His company.

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) said: "The patient poor are the guests of the All-Merciful on the Day of Resurrection, in this world and the hereafter," meaning in their hearts in this world, and physically in the hereafter. For those trials have the effect of making their hearts pure and free from sinful association, and from attachment to creatures, worldly means, wishes and self-willed desires. They are instrumental in melting them and smelting out the pretensions and passions, and the expectation of returns for obedient behavior, in the form of high degrees and stations in the hereafter, in paradise and its gardens.

The sign that trials are being inflicted as retribution and punishment is lack of patience while they last, as well as anxiety and complaining to creatures and people.

The sign that the tribulation is for expiation and purification of sins, is the presence of beautiful patience, without complaint or expression of anxiety to friends and neighbors, and without irritation with the performance of commandments and acts of obedience.

The sign that the trials are for the sake of spiritual progress is the presence of contentment, harmony, self-composure, quiet trust in the working of the God of the earth and the heavens, and annihilation within them until their eventual removal with the passage of time.

Forty-sixth Discourse

On the Sacred Tradition: "When someone is too busy remembering Me..."

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Concerning the words transmitted by the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) from my Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He): "When someone is too busy remembering Me to ask Me for anything, I give him the finest of what I give to those who ask." This means that when Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) wishes to choose and select a believer, He makes him pass through a series of spiritual states, and tests him with various trials and tribulations. Thus He reduces him to poverty after wealth, and compels him to beg from people to obtain a livelihood, since all other avenues are closed to him. Then He saves him from having to beg from them, and compels him to borrow from them instead. Then He saves him from having to borrow, and compels him to manage by earning, which He facilitates and makes easy for him, so he can survive by earning a living, in accordance with the example set by the Prophet. But then He makes this difficult for him, and inspires him to beg from people, ordering him to do so by an inner commandment that makes him know and understand what is required of him. He makes this an act of worship for him, and its omission a sin, so that he may be rid of his vanity and have his lower self put in its place. This is the condition of spiritual training, so his begging is to be regarded as an involuntary compulsion, not as polytheistic association with the All-Compelling One *[al-Jabbār]*.

From this He proceeds to save him, and gives him such strict orders to borrow from people that he can no more ignore them than in the earlier case of begging. Then He moves him out of this, and cuts him off from people and their dealings. He makes his livelihood dependent on his asking it of Him (Almighty and Glorious is

He). Now he asks Him for everything he needs, and He gives it, though not if he keeps silent and refrains from asking.

Next, He makes him change from asking with his tongue to asking with his heart. Now he asks Him with his heart for everything he needs, and He gives it, though He does not give if he asks with his tongue, nor do people give him anything if he begs from them. He makes it unnecessary for him to do this, or to beg in any way at all, outwardly or inwardly, for He invites him to enjoy whatever is beneficial to him, and supplies all his needs in the way of food, drink, clothing, and everything useful to a human being, without his having to be involved or concern himself about it. So he acquires the friendship of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), in accordance with His words:

My protecting friend is Allāh, who revealed the Book. He befriends the righteous. (7:196)

The truth of His saying (Almighty and Glorious is He): "When someone is too busy remembering Me to ask Me for anything, I give him the finest of what I give to those who ask," is now confirmed. This is the state of annihilation (*fanā*), which is the ultimate state of the *Awliyā* [saints] and *Abdāl*. At this stage he is endowed with creative power, and whatever he needs comes about by Allāh's leave. As He has said (Glorious and Exalted is He) in one of His Books:

O son of Adam, I am Allāh, there is no god except Me; I say to a thing, "Be," and it comes to be. Obey Me, so I may let you say to a thing, "Be," and it will come to be.

Forty-seventh Discourse

On closeness to Allāh

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

An old man questioned me in my dream, saying: "What brings a servant close to Allāh (Almighty and Exalted is He)?" I replied: "That has a beginning and an end. The beginning is pious caution *[wara]*, and the end is contentment *[ridā]*, submission *[taslīm]* and absolute trust *[tawakkul]*."

Forty-eighth Discourse

On what the believer must attend to

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

The believer must first attend to the obligatory religious duties. When he has finished performing these, he should attend to recommended practices, then finally to supererogatory devotions and additional works of merit. As long as he has not discharged the obligatory duties, attention to the recommended practices is stupidity and folly. If he does attend to the recommended practices and supererogatory devotions before the supererogatory duties, it will not be accepted of him and he will be treated with contempt. He will invite comparison with a man whom the king summons to his service, but instead of going to him, he remains in the service of the prince, who is the slave and servant of the king and subject to his power and authority.

It is reported from the Commander of the Believers, our Master 'Ali ibn Abī Tālib (may Allāh be well pleased with him) that the Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) said: "The likeness of one who performs the supererogatory prayers before the obligatory ones is that of a woman who gets pregnant, carries until the time for delivery is near, and then has a miscarriage, losing both the foetus and the experience of childbirth." Thus the worshipper finds that his supererogatory prayer is not acceptable to Allāh as long as he has not performed the obligatory one.

To take another analogy, just as the merchant cannot clear a profit until he has recovered his capital, the worshipper may perform supererogatory prayers, but these will not be accepted of him until he has completed his obligatory worship.

The same applies to one who omits a recommended practice and attends to a supererogatory observance which is not a regular complement to the obligatory duties, and which is not clearly

stipulated and emphatically commanded.

Obligatory duties include avoidance of the unlawful, not associating any creature with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), not taking exception to His dispensation and decree, not heeding and obeying people, and not turning away from the commandment of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and obedience to Him. The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has said: "No obedience to a creature in rebellion against the Creator."

Forty-ninth Discourse

On censure of sleep

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

If anyone chooses sleep over that which keeps him awake, he has chosen the most inadequate and inferior option, attachment to death and neglect of all things beneficial, for sleep is the brother of death. This is why sleep cannot overtake Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), since He is free of all deficiencies whatsoever. Sleep is likewise impossible for the angels, because they are close to Him (Almighty and Glorious is He). The same applies to the people of Paradise, because they reside in the most exalted, purest, most precious and honorable domains, and sleep is impossible for them since it would represent a defect in their condition. Thus all good lies in wakefulness, while all evil lies in sleep and heedlessness.

Whenever someone eats from passionate desire, he will eat too much, drink too much, sleep too much, feel much regret for a very long time, and miss very much that is good. Someone who eats even a little unlawful food is like one who eats a lot of permissible food from his passionate desire, because forbidden food obscures and darkens faith, as wine darkens and obscures the mind. When faith is dimmed there is no prayer, no worship, no sincerity. But when someone eats lots of lawful food in compliance with a command [from Allāh], he is like one who eats just a little of the same in a joyful spirit of worship and vital energy.

A lawful thing is light within light, while anything unlawful is darkness within darkness, with nothing good in it. Eating lawful food from passionate desire, without receiving a commandment, and eating the unlawful, these are both soporifics, so there is no good therein.

Fiftieth Discourse

*On how to treat the servant's remoteness from Allāh;
explanation of how to achieve closeness to Him*

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Your situation must necessarily fall into one of two categories: Either you are far away from the presence of Allāh, or you are in close contact with Him. If you are far away from Him, how is it that you just sit back, lazily indifferent to the greatest good fortune and blessing, to lasting glory and supreme satisfaction, to security, wealth and luxury in this world and the hereafter? Get up now, and quickly fly to Him (Almighty and Glorious is He) on your two wings, one of which is the renunciation of sensual pleasures and desires, be they unlawful or permissible, as well as all comforts, while the other is putting up with pain and unpleasantness, bestriding determination and mature resolve, and forsaking creatures, passions, wishes and longings in this world and the hereafter. Fly till you succeed in reaching His presence and get close to Him, for then you will obtain your every wish. You will receive the highest honor and greatest glory.

If you are one of those who are brought close and who attain to Him (Almighty and Glorious is He), one of those caught by providence and embraced by tender care, attracted by love and touched by mercy and compassion, be on your best behavior. Do not become so dazzled by your situation that you fall short in your service, and tend toward your innate frivolity, mischief, ignorance and hastiness. In His words (Exalted is He):

And man assumed it. Surely he is sinful, very foolish. (33:72)

For man is ever hasty. (17:11)

Keep your heart from lingering over what you have left behind, the people, passions, self-will, picking and choosing, the lack of

patience, compliance and contentment in the face of misfortune. Throw yourself down before Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) like a ball before the polo-player, who knocks its around with his mallet, a corpse before the ritual washer of the dead, or a suckling babe in the lap of its mother or its nurse. Be blind to all besides Him (Almighty and Glorious is He), and see nothing but Him as having any existence or power to harm or benefit, to give or to withhold. In times of suffering and affliction, look upon created things and worldly means as His whip (Almighty and Glorious is He) with which he lashes you, and view them in times of blessing and benefaction as His hand with which He feeds you tasty morsels.

Fifty-first Discourse

On abstinence

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

The pious abstainer is rewarded twice on account of destiny's allotments. He is rewarded first of all for being detached about them, so that he does not seize them out of passionate desire and selfish motivation, but simply accepts them in accordance with the Lord's commandment. Once his hostility to his lower self and his opposition to his passions have been established, he is counted among the veracious and saintly people, and is admitted to the company of the *Abdāl* and *'Ārifūn*. It is then that he is commanded to take those things and deal with them, because they are his allotted shares, which he cannot do without and which were created for no one but him. The pen of destiny ran dry when knowledge of them was long ago recorded. When he complies with the commandment, and so obtains or receives this knowledge, he handles these things by virtue of the operation of the Lord's decree and action, without personal involvement in the process, without passion, self-will or self-interest. He is therefore rewarded a second time, for he is acting in obedience to the commandment or in harmony with the action of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Suppose someone objects: How can you use the term 'reward' in connection with someone who is at the ultimate station, who, as you yourself mentioned, has been admitted to the company of the *Abdāl* and *'Ārifūn*, those in whom the Lord's action is at work, who have become extinct to creatures, to selfhood, to passion and self-willed action, to pleasures and longings and expectations of return for their deeds, who see all their obedience and worship as sheer grace from Allāh (Almighty and Exalted is He), as blessing and mercy and helpful support and facilitation from Him (Almighty and Glorious is He), and who believe themselves to be the servants of Allāh

(Almighty and Glorious is He)? The servant has no right to claim against his master, since he is wholly and entirely, in movement or at rest and along with all his acquisitions, a possession of his master. How then can it be said of him that he is 'rewarded,' when he himself does not demand any reward or recompense for his work, and does not regard any deed as his own, but sees himself among those who are quite incompetent and utterly unfit for doing deeds?

To this we respond as follows: What you say is quite true, but for all that, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) bestows His grace and lavishes His blessings on him, and tends him with His kindness, His compassion, His care, His mercy and His noble generosity. Since he restrains his hand from his own self-interest, from seeking strokes of luck to please the self, from procuring benefit for it, and from pushing harm away from it, he is like the suckling babe who makes no movement for his own self-interest, and yet is tenderly looked after by the grace of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and is provided with a home through the hands of his parents, who are his guardians and custodians.

Now that He has divested him of all self-interest, He makes people's hearts sympathetic toward him, imbuing their hearts with mercy and affection for him until everyone is kind and considerate toward him and disposed to treat him well. Thus he becomes entirely extinct to everything besides Allāh, moved only by His commandment or His action, touched by the grace of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) in this world and the hereafter, tenderly cared for in both realms, protected from harm and treated as a friend. A'lāh (Exalted is He) has said:

My protecting friend is Allāh, who revealed the Book. He befriends the righteous. (7:196)

Fifty-second Discourse

On the reason for the trials borne by certain believers

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Allāh's only reason for putting to the test a certain group of believers, dearly loved friends of His, is to bring them back through tribulation to begging, for He loves to receive their requests, and He loves to respond to them when they ask. He then gives generosity and openhandedness their due, for these two demand of Him (Almighty and Glorious is He) that He respond when believers come begging. The response will be forthcoming, though maybe not the instant ready cash—on account of destiny's deferment, not because of unresponsiveness and deprivation.

The servant should therefore behave correctly when misfortune befalls him. He should examine his sinfulness in omitting commandments, committing things forbidden, outwardly and inwardly, and disputing with destiny. Since he deserves punishment for this, he may be undergoing tribulation as a way of paying his dues. If the trial is removed, well and good. If not, he should make a practice of supplication, humble entreaty and apology. He should persist in asking, since it is always possible that he is being tried so that he will put his requests to Him, and he should not be suspicious of Him for postponing His response, as we have explained.

Only Allāh is All-Knowing!

Fifty-third Discourse

On the commandment to seek contentment with Allāh and annihilation [fanā'] in Him.

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Ask Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) for contentment or annihilation, because this is the greatest comfort and the unique high paradise in this world; it is the major gateway of Allāh, and the reason for Allāh's love for His believing servant. When Allāh loves someone He does not chastise him in this world or the hereafter, so in this lie contact *[lubūq]* with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and union with Him. Do not devote your efforts to seeking strokes of luck and shares of good fortune, whether they are not intended for you by destiny or even if they are so intended. If they are not allotted to you, the effort to obtain them is mere stupidity, silliness and ignorance, and this is the harshest of punishments according to the saying: "One of the harshest punishments is the pursuit of something one is destined never to obtain."

If they are allotted to you, on the other hand, preoccupation with them must be due to greed, avarice and divided loyalty from the standpoint of servitude and genuine love, because preoccupation with anything other than Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) amounts to sinful association. The luck-seeker is not honest in his love and friendship, so anyone who needs another besides Allāh must be a liar, while he who demands recompense for his labor is not sincere. He who is sincere will serve Allāh just to give Lordship its due, paying Him the devotion due to a master as of right, for the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) possesses him and is entitled to his labor, his obedience whether he be in action or at rest, and all he may acquire. The servant belongs to his master, along with everything at his disposal. Indeed, as we have explained elsewhere, all acts of worshipful service are a blessing from Allāh

and a favor from Him to His servant, for it is He who helps him to perform them and enables him to accomplish them. It is therefore better and worthier to occupy oneself with giving thanks to the Lord, rather than with asking him for recompense or rewards for such acts.

Besides, how can you dedicate yourself to the quest for lucky chances, when you surely see how it is with most people? Whenever they have a lot of luck, and enjoy a long string of pleasures, benefits and bits of good fortune, they become more resentful of their Lord, more disgruntled and ungrateful for their blessings, while their worries and anxieties increase, and they feel they need things that have not fallen to their lot, as well as what they have already. Their own shares begin to seem mean and paltry and nasty to them, while others' shares appear to their hearts and eyes as huge and great and beautiful, so they set off after them. Then their lives slip away, their energies dwindle, they grow long in the tooth, their wealth gets dispersed, their bodies become weary, their brows start to sweat, and their records are stained by their many offenses, the terrible sins they commit in their quest, and their neglect of their Lord's commandments. They never achieve their objective, and leave this world as bankrupt failures, "[belonging] neither to these nor to those" (4:143). They do not thank their Lord for their own shares which He has allotted them, and so fail to use them in His obedient service. Far from obtaining what they wanted from the shares of others, they waste their own lives in this world and the hereafter. They are the worst of creatures, most ignorant, most foolish, and coarsest in intellect and understanding. Had they accepted destiny's decree, had they been satisfied with the gift of providence, and had they been properly obedient to the Lord, their own shares in this world would have come to them without weariness or worry. Then they would have been brought into the vicinity of the Highest of the high, and in His presence they would have found whatever they wished for and desired.

May Allāh include us, and you, among those who gladly accept His decree, who pray for this and for annihilation, for preservation of spiritual state, and for help in achieving what He loves and finds pleasing!

Fifty-fourth Discourse

*On those who wish to attain to the contact [wuṣūl] with Allāh,
and explanation of the nature of that contact*

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

If someone desires the hereafter, he must renounce this world, and anyone who desires Allāh must renounce the hereafter, forgoing his worldly life for the sake of his life hereafter, and his life hereafter for the sake of his Lord. As long as there remains in his heart any trace of worldly appetite and lust, of desire for various worldly comforts such as food or drink, clothing, marriage, home and means of transport, desire for authority, leadership, and rank in some sphere of learning like legal studies—beyond the five fundamentals of worship, transmission of the ḥadīth, recitation and transmission of the Qur’ān, grammar, linguistics, literary style and rhetoric—desire for the passing away of poverty and the coming-to-be of wealth, the departure of misfortune and the arrival of well-being, and in general for the removal of harm and the advent of benefit, as long as any of this remains he cannot really be a true ascetic [*zābid*]. For in every one of these things there is indulgence of the self, compliance with passion, comfort and fondness for natural appetite, all of which belong to this world, make it seem a nice place to stay in forever, and suggest that it can be trusted and relied on.

He must therefore strive to remove all this from the heart, and prepare himself to weed it out and get rid of it, to cultivate contentment with privation, insolvency and poverty on a permanent basis. There will then be less of it left than one could suck off a date-stone, and so his renunciation of this world will be genuine. When this process is completed, all grief and sorrow will vanish from the heart and all disturbance from the inner feeling, and he will receive comforts, blessings and intimacy with Allāh. As the Prophet

(Allāh bless him and give him peace) has said: "Renunciation of this world refreshes the heart and the body."

As long as any trace of all that remains in his heart, however, worries and fear and anxiety will continue to lodge there, disappointment will cling to him, and he will be screened from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and His nearness by a thick veil with many layers. All this can be removed only through complete abandonment of love of this world and severance of all its ties.

Next, he must renounce the hereafter, forsaking all desire for high degrees and stations, heavenly maids and servants, houses and palaces, gardens and riding mounts, horses and ornaments, food and drink and other things prepared by Allāh (Exalted is He) for His believing servants.

For his conduct, therefore, he should seek no reward or recompense whatsoever from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), neither in this world nor in the hereafter. Then he will find Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) giving him his account in full, as a grace from Him and a mercy. For He will draw him near to Himself and into His presence, treating him kindly and acquainting him with all sorts of favors and goodness, as He makes it His custom (Almighty and Glorious is He) to treat His Messengers, His Prophets, His saints, His favorites [*kbawāss*], and His loved ones [*abbāb*], those endowed with knowledge [*'ilm*] of Him (Almighty and Glorious is He). Thus the servant experiences daily improvement in his condition throughout his entire life. Then he is transferred to the abode of the hereafter, to what no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard of, and no human heart has ever conceived, for it surpasses all understanding and defies description in words.

Only Allāh is All-Knowing!

Fifty-fifth Discourse

On giving up life's pleasures

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

The giving up of life's pleasures occurs three times. To begin with, the servant stumbles along haphazardly, motivated in all circumstances by his natural impulses, without dedication to the service of his Lord, uncurbed by any restraint in the sacred law and uncontrolled by any of its limits. While he is in this condition, Allāh looks upon him, meaning that He has mercy on him. Allāh sends him one of His creatures, one of His righteous servants, as a spiritual adviser in order to awaken his consciousness. He also provides a duplicate adviser from within the person's own self. These two advisers team up against his lower self and natural disposition. As the spiritual counsel begins to take effect, it becomes apparent that his character has been flawed by such habits as riding the steed of natural impulse and contrariety, so he now inclines toward the sacred law in all his behavior.

Thus the servant becomes a Muslim, standing by the law and transcending the state of nature. He forsakes worldly things that are unlawful or dubious, as well as the favors of people, and adopts what is allowed by the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) and religiously lawful in food, drink, dress, marriage, domicile, and all matters essential to preserve his physical health and give him strength for obedience to the Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), and so that he may receive his allotted share in full. This share will not pass him by, and there is no possibility of leaving this world before obtaining it, dealing with it and making full use of it.

Now he travels on the steed of what is religiously permissible and lawful in all his circumstances, until this means of transport finally brings him to the threshold of *Wilāya* and entry into the company of the masters of reality (*muhāqqiqūn*) and the chosen ones (*khawāṣṣ*),

the people of firm resolve, those who aspire to the Truth, and so he eats according to the Lord's commandment. At this point he hears a voice from the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) calling from his inner being: "Abandon your own self and come! Forsake pleasures and creatures if you wish for the Creator. Take off both your shoes, representing your life in this world and your life hereafter. Detach yourself from all entities and everything that exists or will come to exist, and from all desires without exception. Strip yourself bare of everything and become extinct to it all. Perfume yourself with the affirmation of Oneness, abandon polytheistic association and be sincere of purpose. Then tread upon the carpet with good manners, with eyes downcast, looking neither right toward the hereafter nor left toward this world, neither toward people nor toward pleasures."

When he enters this station, and his arrival is confirmed, he will receive the robe of honor from the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), and be invested with all kinds of understanding and knowledge and all kinds of gracious favor. He will be told: "Dress yourself with blessings and favor. Do not be so ill-mannered as to reject this and neglect to put it on, because rejection of the King's blessings amounts to a violation against the King and contempt for His Highness." He now clothes himself with the favor and allotment received by the grace of Allāh, without his personal involvement, whereas previously he used his passion and self-will to dress himself.

Thus there are four conditions in which he may come by portions and allotments. The first is the state of natural impulse, and this is unlawful. The second is in accordance with the sacred law, and this is permissible and lawful. The third is by direct command, and this is the state of saintship and renunciation of passionate desire. The fourth is by the Lord's gracious favor, and this is the state where self-will disappears and *Badaliyya* is attained, where one becomes a recipient, standing at the disposal of destiny, which is the working

of the Lord of Truth; this is the state of knowledge and conscientious rectitude. No one can be called righteous in reality unless he has reached this station. Such is the word of Allāh (Exalted is He):

My protecting friend is Allāh, who revealed the Book. He befriends the righteous. (7:196)

This, then, is the servant who withdraws his hand from procuring things of use and benefit to himself, as well as from warding off those that are harmful and detrimental to him. He is just like a suckling babe with his nurse, or a corpse with the ritual washer of the dead. So the hand of destiny takes charge of his education, without his having to choose or plan. He is beyond all this, where there is neither state nor station nor will, but only standing at destiny's disposal. Sometimes he is expanded, sometimes contracted, sometimes enriched, sometimes impoverished. He makes no choice and does not wish for this or that to go away or change, but shows only constant contentment and eternal concord. This is the final culmination of the states of the saints and *Abdāl* (sanctified be the secrets of their being).

Fifty-sixth Discourse

*On the servant's becoming extinct [fanā'] to creatures,
passions, the self, the will and desires*

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

When the servant becomes extinct to creatures, passion, self, will and desires of this world and the hereafter, when he wishes only for Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and everything leaves his heart, it is then that he attains to the contact with the Lord of Truth. The Lord chooses him and selects him, loves him, causes him to be loved by His creatures, and makes him love Him and His nearness, enjoying His favor and disposing of His blessings. He opens for him the gates of His mercy, and promises never to shut them against him. Then the servant opts for Allāh, operates according to His plan, wills according to His will, is content with His good pleasure, carries out His orders and not those of any other, and sees nothing but Him (Almighty and Glorious is He) as being in existence or in action.

At this point it may happen that Allāh makes him a promise, but then does not show the servant any fulfillment thereof, and does not effect the change he had come to expect. This is because the difference has become irrelevant with the cessation of passion and will. He has become a channel for the action and will of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), so there can be no question of promise or breach of promise where he is concerned, because such things only apply to one who still has passion and self-will. To understand what this promise now means to him in relation to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), consider the example of a man who decides on a certain course of action and intends to carry it out, but then proceeds differently. We may compare the abrogation of certain verses by others in the revelations made by Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) to our Prophet Muhammad (Allāh bless him and

give him peace):

Such of Our revelations as We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We replace with one better or as good. Do you not know that Allāh has power over all things? (2:106)

For the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) was stripped of passion and self-will except in those instances mentioned by Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) in the Qur'ān, such as the case of the prisoners on the day of the Battle of Badr:

You desire the chance goods of this world, but Allāh desires the hereafter, and Allāh is Mighty, Wise. Were it not for an ordinance from Allāh that had already gone forth, there would have befallen you a mighty chastisement for taking what you did. (8:67, 68)

He was the desired of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), who did not leave him in one state, but moved him on toward his destiny, giving him scope in relation to destiny and transforming his condition. The Lord (Exalted is He) alerted him with His words:

Do you not know that Allāh has power over all things? (2:106)

In other words, you are in the midst of the ocean of destiny, tossed about by its waves sometimes this way, sometimes that way.

The culmination of the saint's business is the starting point of the business of the Prophet. Beyond *Wilāya* and *Badaliyya* there is only Prophethood [*nubuwwa*].

Only Allāh is All-Knowing!

Fifty-seventh Discourse

On not contesting destiny, and the commandment to keep oneself content therewith

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

All states are restriction, because the saint is commanded to preserve them, and whatever one is under orders to preserve must constitute restriction. Standing at the disposal of destiny, on the other hand, is sheer relaxation, because there is nothing there that one is commanded to preserve, apart from simply being in readiness for destiny. What is required of him is not to dispute with destiny, but to comply, to accept without contest whatever may befall him, whether it be sweet or bitter. States have prescribed limits, so it is commanded that their limits be maintained, but the grace that is destiny has no bounds to be safeguarded. The indication that the servant has entered the station of destiny, the action of the Lord, and relaxation, is that he is commanded to ask for the good things of life, after having been ordered to forgo them and abstain from them. For when his inner being has been emptied of life's pleasures, and there is nothing left in him except the Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), he is allowed to relax and is now commanded to ask, wish and apply for the things that are his allotted share. He is bound to receive and obtain them in response to his request, so that his dignity and rank in the sight of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and the Lord's gracious favor toward him, may be confirmed by His acceptance of this prayer. Freedom to ask for the good things of life to be granted is one of the chief marks of relaxation in the wake of restriction, and of having emerged from states, stations and the burden of maintaining constraints.

Should it be objected that this may lead to non-observance of religious duties, to atheistic freethinking, departure from Islam and

rejection of the word of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He): "And serve your Lord until the Certainty comes to you" (15:99), one could say in reply: By no means does it lead to or result in that. Allāh is far too generous, and His friend too dear to Him, for Him to bring that friend into a situation so unsatisfactory and repugnant to His law and His religion. On the contrary, He keeps him safe from all that has been mentioned, steers him away from it, protects him, alerts him and directs him toward observing the guidelines. Thus freedom from sin is achieved and the legal limits are maintained without hardship or trouble on his part, he being absent from it all in nearness to the Lord, who says (Exalted is He):

So it was, that We might ward off from him evil and lewdness; he was one of Our devoted servants. (12:24)

He also says (Almighty and Glorious is He):

As for My servants, you have no authority over them. (15:42)

And He says (Exalted is He):

But for the sincere servants of Allāh. (37:40)

O you poor wretch! Such a servant is borne by the Lord and desired of Him, and He nurtures him in the lap of His nearness and His kindness. How could Satan get to him, and how could he even be approached by things repugnant and abhorrent to the sacred law? You have thrown away the fodder and over-inflated the empty bag! You have said something quite disgusting. Perish these vile and mean intentions, these faulty, far-fetched ideas, these depraved and unbalanced notions.

May Allāh give refuge to us and the brethren from assorted errors, through His all-embracing power and His wide mercy. May He shield us with His completely protective and safeguarding shelter. May He nourish us with His abundant blessings and His enduring favors, through His love and generosity.

Exalted is His estate!

Fifty-eighth Discourse

On looking away from all other directions, and seeking the direction of Allāh's favor

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Be blind to all quarters and do not ogle anything out there, because as long as you are looking in any one of those directions, the direction of the favor and nearness of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will not become open to you. So block off all sides with the affirmation of His Oneness and the effacement [*imbā*] of your own self, then with your annihilation [*fanā*], your extinction [*mabū*] and your knowledge. Then the eye of your heart will open in the direction of Allāh's enormous favor, and you will see it also with the eyes in your head, by the rays of light from your heart [*qalb*], your faith and your certitude. For at this point the light from your inner will shine upon your outer being, like the light of a candle inside a gloomy house on a dark night, shining through the chinks and windows so that the outside of the house is illuminated by the light within. The self and the organs of the body will now feel at ease with the promise and gift of Allāh, instead of looking for the gift and promise of others besides Him (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Have mercy on your own self and do it no wrong. Do not cast it into the darkness of your ignorance and folly, by looking in all directions toward creatures, worldly might and strength, acquisition and means, and so putting your trust in them. For then all these quarters will be closed to you, and the direction of the grace of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will not be opened to you, either, as a punishment and retribution for the polytheistic association you have committed by looking at something other than Him (Almighty and Glorious is He). But when you find Him, behold His favor, pin your hopes on Him instead of others, and blind yourself to all that

is apart from Him, He will bring you near and draw you close to Himself. He will have mercy on you, nourish you and give you food and drink, make you fit and healthy, grant you gifts and enrich you, and then after this you will no longer see yourself in terms of poverty or affluence.

Fifty-ninth Discourse

On cheerful acceptance of misfortune, and being grateful for blessings

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Your condition must always be either a tribulation or a blessing. If it happens to be a trial, you are required to endure it with perseverance (at the lower end of the scale) and patience (which is a higher grade), then cheerful acceptance and compliance, then annihilation (*fanā*), which is proper to the *Abdāl*. If it is a blessing, on the other hand, it behooves you to be grateful for it. Thanks can be offered with the tongue, the heart, and the limbs and organs of the body.

To give thanks with the tongue means acknowledging that the blessing is from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and dissociating it from creatures, from your own self and your power, strength and earning capacity, and from any other persons who may have had a hand in it. You and they are only means, tools and instruments for it, while its real allotter, executor and creator, the one responsible for it as active agent and prime mover, is Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). The allotter is Allāh, the executor is He, and the creator is He, so He is more deserving of thanks than any other. Attention is paid not to the errand-boy who delivers a present, but to the master, the sender of the gift. Concerning those who lack this correct attitude, Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

They know an outward part of this world's life, and of the hereafter they are heedless. (30:7)

If someone notices only the exterior and the apparent cause, and his knowledge and understanding go no further, he is ignorant, defective and lacking in intelligence. An intelligent person is so called on account of his insight into ultimate principles.

As for giving thanks with the heart, this means holding the constant belief, the firm, strong and secure conviction, that everything you have in the way of blessings, benefits and enjoyments, outwardly and inwardly, be you active or at rest, comes from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and from no other. When you give thanks with your tongue, you will be expressing what you feel in your heart. As He says (Almighty and Glorious is He):

And whatever blessing you enjoy, it is from Allāh. (16:53)

He also says (Exalted is He):

And He has lavished on you His blessings, outward and inward. (31:20)

He says further (Exalted is He):

And if you count the favor of Allāh, you will never add it up. (16:18)

In the light of all this, the believer can have no benefactor apart from Allāh (Exalted is He).

As for giving thanks with the limbs and organs of the body, you do this by making them move and work in obedience to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) to the exclusion of all creatures. You must not respond to the behest of any creature in anything involving opposition to Allāh (Exalted is He). This extends to the self, the passions, self-will, desires, and everything else in the realm of creation. Make obedience to Allāh the basic principle, the guide and leader, and everything else the offshoot, the follower and disciple. If you do otherwise you will be a despotic tyrant, applying a rule that is not the rule laid down by Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) for His believing servants, treading a path that is not the way of the righteous. Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said:

Whoever judges not by that which Allāh has revealed: such are unbelievers. (5:44)

In another verse of the Qur'ān:

Whoever judges not by that which Allāh has revealed: such are wrongdoers. (5:45)

And in yet another:

Such are transgressors. (5:17)

In that case your destination will be the fire "of which the fuel is men and stones" (66:6), and you, who cannot bear a spell of fever in this world, nor even the slightest spark of flame, how will you endure eternity in hell's abyss together with its inmates? Rescue, rescue! Quickly, quickly! Allāh, Allāh!

Attend to both states and their prerequisites, for you cannot go through life without experiencing one or the other, either tribulation or blessing. Give each state its due share of patience and gratitude, as I have explained to you. While in the state of affliction you must not complain to any of Allāh's creatures, nor display your frustration to anyone. Harbor no suspicion of your Lord, and do not doubt His wisdom and His choice of what is best for you in this world and the hereafter. In your distress you should not go looking to any of His creatures for a remedy, because that would amount to your associating something with Him (Almighty and Glorious is He). No one is joint owner with Him (Almighty and Glorious is He) of anything in His possession. There is no one capable of causing harm or benefit, of repelling or attracting, of causing sickness and disaster, of healing and restoring, apart from Him (Almighty and Glorious is He). So do not occupy yourself with creatures, inwardly or outwardly, for they can never serve you as a substitute for Allāh. You should rather practice patience, cheerful acceptance and compliance, and annihilation in His action (Almighty and Glorious is He).

If you are deprived of all this, however, you are obliged to appeal to Him (Almighty and Glorious is He) for help, to make humble entreaty, to complain to Him of your evil self and the remoteness of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), to acknowledge His blessing by affirming His Oneness, to rid yourself of polytheistic association, and to seek patience, contentment and harmony, until the prescript of destiny expires. Then the affliction will cease, the

trouble will be removed, and the blessing will come, with ease and happiness and joy, as it was in the case of Allāh's Prophet Job (on him and on our own Prophet be the most excellent blessing and most noble peace), just as the darkness of night gives way to the brightness of day, and as the cold of winter yields to the summer breeze and its sweet scent. For everything has an opposite and counterpart, an extreme limit, a beginning and an end. Patience is the key to it, the start and finish and the beauty of it. As we are told in the tradition: "Patience is to faith as the head is to the body," or in another version: "Patience is the whole of faith."

Gratitude can sometimes be inherent in simple enjoyment of the blessings that are the shares He has allotted you. Your thanks are then offered by enjoying those blessings in your state of annihilation (*fana*) and extinction of passionate desire, in your state of zeal and awareness. This is the condition of the *Abdāl*, and the ultimate attainment. Take careful note of what I have been telling you, then you will be guided aright if Allāh (Exalted is He) so will.

Sixtieth Discourse

On the beginning and the end

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

The beginning is making the move from ordinary behavior to that prescribed by the sacred law, then to that decreed by destiny, and then coming back to the ordinary, with observance of the rules as a precondition. You must therefore leave your ordinary habits in matters of food, drink, dress, marital relations, domicile, natural inclination and custom, in favor of the commandments and prohibitions of the sacred law. You must follow the Book of Allāh and the exemplary pattern of His Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace), as Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it Whatever he forbids you, abstain from it. (59:7)

He also says (Exalted is He):

Say, "If you love Allāh, follow me; Allāh will love you." (3:31)

Thus you will become extinct to your passion, to your own self and its folly, both outwardly and inwardly. Your inner being will contain nothing but your affirmation of Allāh's Oneness, and in your outer life there will be nothing but obedience to Allāh and worshipful observance of what He commands and forbids. This will come to be your normal practice, your undergarment and outer clothing, when you are in action and when you are at rest, by night and by day, on your travels and at home, in hard and easy times, in health, in sickness, and in all conditions.

Then you will be transported to the Valley of Destiny, and destiny will go to work in you without restraint. You will pass beyond your striving and exertion, beyond your power and strength, and allotments will be delivered to you, "on which the pen ran dry, and the knowledge of which has gone before." With these you will occupy

yourself, and you will be granted protection and safety from them, so that the rules are properly observed in dealing with them, so that they are brought into conformity with the action of the Lord, and so that no statute of the sacred law is infringed through atheistic heresy or undue license in respect of things that are forbidden. Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

Surely We have revealed the Reminder, and We assuredly watch over it. (15:9)

He also says (Exalted is He):

You are today in our presence established and worthy of trust. (12:54)

You will therefore be accompanied by safekeeping and protection until the time of the meeting with Allāh's mercy. These are nothing but your shares, prepared for you by destiny. They were withheld from you during your journey, while you were traveling and making your way through the deserts of your natural state and the barren wastes of habitual passion, because they are a heavy burden. You were relieved of this burden so that it would not weigh you down and make you weak, until the time of arrival at the threshold of annihilation (*fandā'*), which is arrival in the proximity of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) and intimate knowledge of Him, privileged access to secrets and the religious sciences, and entry into the ocean of lights, where the darkness of nature no longer impairs the lights.

The natural state persists until the spirit parts company with the body, so that the allotted shares may be received in full, because if man were to lose his human nature altogether, he would join the angels, and the divine wisdom would be null and void. That nature therefore stays on to receive the allotted shares and portions, but as daily rations, not as real estate. As the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has said: "Three things belonging to this world of yours have been made dear to me: perfume, women, and, as cool

refreshment for my eyes, the ritual prayer." For when the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) became extinct to this world and all it contains, his allotted shares were restored to him, after having been withheld from him while he was on his journey toward his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). He then received them all, complying with the will of his Lord (Exalted is He), gladly submitting to His action, and obedient to His command. Holy are His names, and all-embracing is His mercy. His grace encompasses His saints and His Prophets (on them be blessing and peace). In this respect, therefore, the saint has the same experience: his allotted shares and portions are given back to him, with due observance of the rules of law. This is returning from the end to the beginning.

Only Allāh is All-Knowing!

Sixty-first Discourse

On pausing before taking any action until its permissibility is clear

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Every believer is under obligation to pause and take stock before receiving and taking delivery of destiny's allotments, until the legal ruling certifies their acceptability and religious knowledge attests their allocation. The believer is a thorough investigator, while the hypocrite is a snatcher. As the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has said: "The believer always takes pause." He also said (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "Leave anything that makes you doubtful and stick to what arouses no misgivings in you."

The believer will therefore pause when presented with any opportunity to partake of food, drink, clothing, marital relations or whatever may open up for him. He takes nothing until he has a legal ruling to the effect that it is permissible for him to take and accept it, assuming that he is in the state of pious devotion (*taqwā*), or until he is so instructed by direct command, if he is in the state of saintship, or by virtue of knowledge in the state of *Badaliyya* and *Ghawthiyya*, or by the action that is destiny pure and simple, as experienced in the state of annihilation (*fana*).

Then comes another state, in which he receives whatever comes to him and opens up for him, provided it is unobjectionable from the standpoint of prescription, commandment or knowledge. If an objection is raised by any these, however, he refrains from accepting the thing in question. This state is the direct opposite of the first, for in the first state hesitation and substantiation have priority, while in the second the presumption is in favor of receiving, accepting and using the opportunity offered.

Next comes the third state, where it is simply a matter of receiving

and using the blessings that are made available, without reference to any of those three things. This is the reality of annihilation, in which the believer becomes immune from all disasters and infringement of the rules of sacred law, kept safe and far removed from all evils. As Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

So it was, that We might ward off from him evil and lewdness; he was one of Our devoted servants. (12:37)

With such protection against any infringement of the rules, the servant comes to be like a deputy and authorized agent, with complete freedom of action in all permissible matters, to whom the good that is his allotted share has been made easily accessible, cleared of troubles and woes in this world and the hereafter, and who is in harmony with the will of the Lord of Truth, His good pleasure and His action. There is no state above this, and this is the ultimate goal. It belongs to the masters (*sādāt*), the great and pure saints, the possessors of secrets, who have approached the threshold of the states of the Prophets (Allāh's blessings be upon them all).

Sixty-second Discourse

On love, the beloved, and what is required in respect of both

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

How often the believer will say: "So and so is brought near to the Lord, while I am kept at a distance; so and so receives gifts, while I am deprived; so and so is enriched, while I am impoverished; so and so is granted good health, while I am plagued with illness; so and so is honored, while I am despised; so and so is praised, while I am blamed; so and so is believed, while I am called a liar." Does he not know that He is One, and that the One loves oneness in love, and loves one who is single in his love for Him? If He drew you near to Him by means of any other, your love for Him (Almighty and Glorious is He) might be diminished and dispersed. Perhaps you would develop an affection for the one at whose hands you experienced the connection and the blessing, so that the love for Allāh in your heart would decrease.

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is jealous and loves no partner, so He keeps the hands of others from connecting with you, their tongues from praising and complimenting you, and their feet from running toward you, so that you will not devote your attention to them instead of to Him. Have you not heard the saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "Hearts are disposed by nature to love those who treat them well"? Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) therefore uses all ways and means to keep people from treating you well, until you profess His Oneness, love Him, and become His in every respect, outwardly and inwardly, in action and at rest, so that you see no good coming from any but Him and no evil coming from any but Him (Almighty and Glorious is He). You become extinct to creatures and to the self, to passion, will and desire, and to everything apart from the Lord. Then He causes hands to open up to you with delights and gifts and presents, and

tongues to praise and compliment you, and so He always pampers you in this world and then in the hereafter.

So do not misbehave. Notice Him who notices you, attend to Him who attends to you, love Him who loves you, answer Him who summons you, give your hand to Him who holds you tight from falling, who brings you out of the darkness of your ignorance, saves you from destruction, washes away all your dirt, cleans up all your filth, and releases you from your stinking carcass, from your wicked fantasies, from your evil-prompting self, from your misguided and misguiding fellows, from your devils and your ignorant friends, those highway robbers on the road to the Lord of Truth, who stand between you and all that is precious and valuable and dear.

How much longer habits, how much longer creatures, how much longer passions, how much longer folly, how much longer this world, how much longer the hereafter, how much longer that which is other than the Lord? Where are you in relation to the Creator of things, the Maker and Shaper, the First and the Last, the Outer and the Inner, the point of return and point of origin, to whom all heart belong, the solace of spirits, the resting place of burdens, the giving of gifts and bestowal of blessings?

Mighty is His estate!

Sixty-third Discourse

On a kind of inner knowledge [ma'rifa]

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

In a dream, I seemed to be saying: "O polytheist, guilty of associating partners with his Lord: inwardly, his own self, outwardly, His creation, and in his behavior, his own will!" A man by my side then asked: "What kind of talk is this?" I replied: "This is a kind of inner knowledge."

Sixty-fourth Discourse

On death without life, and life without death

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

I was feeling very depressed one day, and my soul was in turmoil. Then someone said to me: "What do you want?" I replied: "I want a death without life and a life without death." I was then asked: "What is death without life and life without death?" I said: "Death without life is my dying to my own species of creatures, so that I do not see them as the source of injury or benefit. It is my dying to my own self, my passion, my will and my desire, in this world and the hereafter, so that I do not live or exist in any of these. As for life without death, that is my living by the action of my Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) without my having any existence in it, while the dying therein is my existence with Him (Almighty and Glorious is He). This has been the most precious purpose I have held before me, ever since I became conscious."

Sixty-Fifth Discourse

On the prohibition of resenting Allāh for deferring response to supplication

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

What is this indignation with your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) for delay in responding to your supplication? You say: "I am forbidden to ask of creatures and am required to ask of Him, but I appeal to Him and He does not answer me." Well, it may be said to you: "Are you a free man or a slave?" If you say: "I am a free man," you must be an unbeliever. If you say: "I am a slave to Allāh," we must ask you: "Are you then distrustful of your Master for deferring a response to your supplication? Are you doubting His wisdom and His mercy toward you and all His creatures, and His knowledge of all their conditions, or are you not distrustful of Him (Almighty and Glorious is He)?"

If you are not distrustful of Him, but acknowledge His wisdom, His will and His beneficence toward you, and the postponement of this, then you owe Him (Almighty and Glorious is He) your gratitude, because He has chosen what is most beneficial for you, as a blessing and to prevent corruption. If you are distrustful of Him because of this, you are an unbeliever by virtue of that distrust, since you thereby ascribe injustice to Him, and He is no tyrant to His servants. He does not approve of injustice, and it is impossible for Him to be unjust, for He is your owner and the owner of everything. The term injustice does not apply to Him, because an unjust person is one who disposes of another's property without his permission. You therefore have no pretext for resentment against Him for the way He operates in dealing with you, contrary to your natural disposition and selfish desire, even though it may be outwardly detrimental to you.

It is your duty to be thankful, to practice patience and compliance,

and to give up resentment, distrust, and indulgence of the folly and passion of the self, which makes you stray from the path of Allāh. It is your duty to persist in supplication, to be sincere in seeking refuge, to think well of your Lord, to await relief from Him, to believe His promise, to be modest toward Him, to comply with His commandment, to keep up the affirmation of His Oneness, to be quick to carry out His orders, and to be as if you were dead when His decree alights upon you and takes effect within you.

If you simply cannot avoid being distrustful and entertaining bad thoughts, well, your evil-prompting self, so rebellious against its Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), is best suited to such attitudes, so you should ascribe injustice to it rather than to your Lord. Beware of teaming up and making friends with it, of accepting its deeds and words under any circumstances, for it is Allāh's enemy and your enemy, and its ally is Allāh's enemy and your enemy, Satan the accursed. It is the devil's friend, his spy and his confidant. Allāh, Allāh, and again Allāh! Beware, beware! Escape, escape! Distrust it, ascribe injustice to it, and recite to it the words of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He):

What concern has Allāh for your punishment if you are thankful and believe? (4:147)

And His words (Exalted is He):

Surely Allāh does not wrong mankind in anything, but mankind wrong themselves. (10:44)

Recite these and other Qur'ānic verses and traditions. Fight for Allāh against your own self, do battle with it for His sake (Almighty and Glorious is He), be a warrior, sword-bearer and commander of His troops and His army, for it is the greatest enemy of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

O David, relinquish your passion, for there is no contender who contends with Me for My kingdom except the passion of man.

Sixty-sixth Discourse

On the commandment to make supplication, and the prohibition of omitting it

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Do not say: "I shall not offer prayers of supplication to Allāh, because if what I ask for has been allotted to me, it will come to me whether I ask for it or not, while if it has not been so allotted it will not be given to me on request." No, you should ask Him (Almighty and Glorious is He) for all you want and need of the good things of this world and the hereafter, provided there is nothing unlawful or harmful included, because Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has commanded us to ask and urges us to do so. He says (Exalted is He):

Call upon Me and I will answer you. (40:60)

He also says (Almighty and Glorious is He):

Ask Allāh of His bounty—and do not covet that whereby Allāh has made some of you excel others. (4:32)

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) has said: "Ask of Allāh, fully confident of His response." He has also said (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "Ask of Allāh with the palms of your hands [upturned].". There are other traditions of similar import.

Do not say: "I asked something of Him, but He did not give it to me, so I shall not ask Him again." No, go on appealing to Him, then if what you ask for is allotted to you, He will deliver it to you after you have requested it, thereby increasing your faith, certitude and profession of Oneness, and encouraging you to give up asking things of people in favor of turning to Him in every situation and presenting all your needs to Him (Almighty and Glorious is He). If it is not allotted to you, on the other hand, He will grant you freedom from needing it, and make you content with Him (Almighty and

Glorious is He) in spite of your poverty. Be it poverty or sickness, He will help you to accept your condition. If it is a question of debt, He will change the creditor's attitude from one of harsh demand to one of sympathy and willingness to wait and make it easy for you until you are better off, or even to waive or reduce the debt. If it is not written off or reduced in this world, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will give you abundant compensation in the hereafter for what He did not give you in response to your prayer in this world. For He is Generous, Self-Sufficing and Compassionate, and will not disappoint one who prays to Him in this world or the hereafter. Some benefit and gain is therefore bound to come of it, sooner or later.

As it is reported in the tradition: "The believer will see in his record, on the Day of Resurrection, some good deeds he had not done and knew nothing about. He will be asked: 'Do you recognize them?' So he will say: 'I don't know how I came by these.' Then he will be told: 'These are compensation for the requests you made in the abode of the lower world.'" This is because, in addressing his requests to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), he is remembering Allāh, professing His Oneness, putting things in their proper place, giving credit where it is due, attributing nothing to his own power and strength, and forsaking pride, arrogance and haughtiness—all righteous deeds, for which there is reward with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Sixty-seventh Discourse

On struggle with the self, and description of its nature

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Whenever you struggle with your own self, overcome it, and slay it with the sword of opposition, Allāh brings it back to life. It pits itself against you, and tries to get you to satisfy its appetites and desires, sinful as well as permissible, so you must keep returning to the struggle and competition, so that merit is always being recorded in your favor. This is the meaning of the saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "We have returned from the minor struggle *[al-jihād al-asghar]* to the major struggle *[al-jihād al-akbar]*." He was referring to the battle with the self, because it is constantly addicted to cravings and pleasures, and engrossed in sinful disobedience. This is the meaning of Allāh's words (Almighty and Glorious is He):

And serve your Lord until the Certainty comes to you. (15:99)

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) commanded His Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) to serve Him, and that service is performed by opposing the self, because all service is rejected by the self, which desires its very opposite until the coming of the Certainty, meaning death.

If someone should ask: "How could the self of the Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) refuse to serve, when he (blessing and peace be upon him) has no passion, and "he does not speak from his own desire; it is naught but an inspiration that is inspired" (53:3,4), the answer will be that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) addressed His Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) in order that the sacred law might be established, and become generally applicable to his community until the advent of the Hour. Moreover, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) gave His

Prophet (on him be blessing and peace) power over the self and the passions, so that they would not harm him or oblige him to struggle, in contradistinction to his community.

When the believer persists in this struggle, therefore, until death comes to him and he meets his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) with sword unsheathed, spattered with the blood of self and passion, He gives him the share of Paradise He has guaranteed him, in accordance with His word (Almighty and Glorious is He):

But as for him who feared to stand before his Lord and restrained the self from passion, the Garden will be his home. (79:40,41)

Then when He has made him enter Paradise, and has made it his home, his dwelling and his destination, he will be secure from having to move or be transferred to any other place, or return to the abode of this world. Every day and every hour, He will supply him afresh with all kinds of blessings, and provide him with an endless variety of fine attire and decorations, limitless and inexhaustible, just as he kept renewing in this world, every day, every hour and every moment, the struggle with self and passion.

As for the unbeliever */kāfir/*, the hypocrite */munāfiq/* and the sinner */āṣl/*, since they have neglected to struggle with self and passion in this world and preferred to follow them, since have they allied themselves with Satan and indulged in all kinds of sinfulness, such as unbelief and polytheism as well as lesser offenses, until death overtakes them without submission */Islām/* and repentance, Allāh will make them enter the fire prepared for unbelievers, according to His words (Almighty and Glorious is He):

And be on your guard against the fire prepared for unbelievers. (3:131)

When He has made them enter it, and made it their dwelling and destination and resort, so that it burns their skins and their flesh, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will renew their skin and flesh, as He has said (Almighty and Glorious is He):

As often as their skins are thoroughly burned, We shall exchange them for fresh skins. (4:56)

Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will do this to them, just as they made alliance with their own selves and their passions in this world, in disobedience to Him (Almighty and Glorious is He). So the inmates of the fire will have their skin and flesh renewed all the time, to inflict torment and agony upon them, whereas the people of Paradise will have their bliss renewed at every moment, to multiply the comforts and pleasures they enjoy. The reason for this lies in their struggle with the self and their non-compliance with it in the abode of this world. This is what is meant by the saying of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "This world is the seed-bed of the hereafter."

Sixty-eighth Discourse

On the words of Allāh (Exalted is He): "Every day He is about some business."

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

When Allāh grants a servant what he asks for and gives him what he requests, there is no disruption of His will, nor of the decree on which the pen of destiny ran dry, and knowledge of which was long ago established. In fact, the servant's petition neatly coincides with the purpose of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), so the response and the satisfaction of the need occur at the precise moment appointed by Him, of old, as the time for the fulfillment of destiny. This is how the scholars have taken His words (Almighty and Glorious is He): "Every day He is about some business" (55:29), meaning that He is steering the preordainments toward their moments in time.

Thus Allāh gives nothing to anyone in this world just because of his supplication, and by the same token He averts nothing from him merely because of his prayer. The tradition: "Only by supplication is the decree reversed," has been said to mean that the decree is reversed only by a prayer that has itself been destined to reverse the decree.

Likewise, no one will enter Paradise in the hereafter on the strength of his deeds, but only through the mercy of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), although His servants will be given their degrees in Paradise according to their works. Tradition tells us that 'Āisha (may Allāh be well pleased with her) once asked the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "Will anyone enter Paradise because of his deeds?" He said: "No, only through Allāh's mercy." She then said: "Not even you?" So he said: "Not even I, unless Allāh covers me with His mercy," placing his hand on the top of his head as he spoke.

By this he indicated that Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) is under no obligation to anyone, and is not bound to fulfill any contract. He rather does whatever He wishes, chastises whom He will, forgives whom He will, and has mercy on whom He will. He has power to do whatever He wishes, and cannot be questioned about what He does, though His servants will be questioned. He provides sustenance to whom He will without reckoning, by His favor, His mercy and His grace, and He withholds from whom He will in His justice. How could it not be so, since all creation, from the presence of the Throne down to the soil that is the seventh and lowest earth, is His domain and His handiwork. They have no owner other than Him, no maker other than Him. He says (Almighty and Glorious is He): "Is there any Creator other than Allāh?" (35:3). And He says (Exalted is He): "Is there any God beside Allah?" (27:63). And He says (Exalted is He): "Do you know of any that can be named with His Name?" (19:65). And He says (Exalted is He):

Say: "O Allāh! Owner of Sovereignty! You give sovereignty to whom You will, and You withdraw sovereignty from whom You will. You exalt whom You will, and You abase whom You will. In Your hand is all good. You are Able to do all things. You cause the night to pass into the day, and You cause the day to pass into the night. You bring forth the living from the dead, and You bring forth the dead from the living. And you give sustenance to whom You choose, without reckoning." (3:26, 27)

Sixty-ninth Discourse

On the commandment to ask Allāh for forgiveness, protection from sin, help toward success, contentment and patience

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Do not ask Allāh for anything except forgiveness of previous sins, protection from sins in the coming days ahead, help to succeed in goodly obedience and following orders, readiness to accept the bitterness of destiny's decree, patience in bearing the hardships of misfortune, gratitude for the abundance of blessings and gifts, and finally, to die with a good ending and then be united with *al-Anbiyā'*, *as-Siddiqūn*, *ash-Shuhadā'* and *as-Sālibūn*, the best of company!

Ask Him not for worldly things like the removal of poverty and misfortune and the granting of affluence and health, but rather for contentment with what He has allotted and arranged. Ask Him for constant safekeeping in the situation in which He has placed and installed you as a trial, until He transfers you from it to another that is its very opposite. For you do not know in which lies the good, whether in poverty or in affluence, in misfortune or in well-being. He has kept the knowledge of things hidden from you, and He deals singlehandedly (Almighty and Glorious is He) with the good and the bad.

It is related of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allāh be well pleased with him) that he said: "I do not care in what condition I find myself when morning comes, whether it be disagreeable to me or to my liking, because I do not know in which of them lies the good." He could say this because he was well contented with Allāh's management (Almighty and Glorious is He), and satisfied with His choice and His judgment. Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

Fighting is prescribed for you, though it be hateful to you. But it may happen that you hate a thing which is good for you, and may happen

that: you love a thing which is bad for you. Allāh knows, and you know not. (2:216)

Remain in this state until your passion fades away and your self is broken, humbled, overpowered and subdued, and then your will and desires vanish too, and all entities exit from your heart, leaving nothing in it other than Allāh (Exalted is He). Then your heart will be filled with the love of Allāh (Exalted is He), and your motive for seeking Him (Almighty and Glorious is He) will be sincere. At His command, your will is now restored to you, to seek some taste of worldly and otherworldly joys, so you ask Him (Almighty and Glorious is He) for such things and put your request to Him in compliance with His command. If He grants your wish, you will thank Him and put it to good use, and if He withholds it you will not feel resentful or change your inner attitude toward Him, and will not accuse Him of being miserly about it. For your asking will not have been motivated by your passion and self-will, since your heart is free from such things and you have no desire for them. You are simply following His orders by making your request.

So, peace!

Seventieth Discourse

On gratitude and acknowledgment of shortcomings

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

How can it be proper for you to be conceited about your deeds, to take a self-centered view of them, and to demand remuneration for them, when all your success is due to Allāh (Exalted is He), to His help, His strength, His will and His favor? Even when it is a matter of renouncing sinful rebellion against Him, this too is made possible through the immunity, protection and shelter He provides. Where is your gratitude for this, your acknowledgment of these blessings He has conferred on you?

What is this folly and ignorance, that you take pride in what is really someone else's courage, generosity and charitable outlay? When you killed your enemy, it was only after someone brave had struck him first, then you just finished off the killing. But for his intervention, you would have been felled instead of your enemy. Nor would you have laid out any of your money, had you not been insured for the whole amount by an honest, honorable and trustworthy guarantor. But for his word, and your greed for what he had promised and guaranteed you, you would not have donated a single grain of your wealth. How can you then take personal pride in your deed?

Your proper course is to offer thanks and appreciation to the Helper, and constant praise to Allāh, attributing it all to Him in all conditions, except for things that are evil, sinful and blameworthy. The latter you must attribute to your own self, which you should accuse and consider guilty of iniquity and misconduct. This is what it deserves, because it is the seat of every evil and instigates every wrong and disaster.

He (Almighty and Glorious is He) is your Creator and the Creator of your deeds, as well as your acquisition, so you are the earner and

He is the Creator. As someone learned in the ways of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said: "They come, and they cannot miss you." In the words of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "Do good works, draw near, and direct yourselves aright, for everything is within easy reach of that for which it was created."

Seventy-first Discourse

On the seeker and the sought

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

You must be one or the other, either a seeker or one who is sought. If you are a seeker, you must be heavy-laden, a bearer who carries all that is awkward and weighty. For you have a quest, and anyone with a quest must suffer hardship till he reaches his goal, wins his beloved, and achieves his aspiration. You must not shy away from trials that befall you, affecting your person, property, family and children, until your burden is lifted off you, your load is taken away, your agonies are removed, and you are relieved of trouble and humiliation. Then you will be kept safe from every kind of vice, dirt, filth and degradation, and from being in need of creatures and fellow beings, and so you will be admitted into the company of those who are loved and pampered and sought.

If you are one who is sought, you must not distrust the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) for inflicting misfortune on you, nor should you have misgivings about your rank and standing with Him (Almighty and Glorious is He). For He may be trying you in order to complete your human development, and to elevate your station toward the stations of the saints and *Abdāl*. Would you like to have your station and degree sit lower on the scale than theirs, or your robe of honor, your light and blessings be inferior to theirs? Even if you are ready to be satisfied with less, the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) is not content to let you settle for it. Allāh (Exalted is He) has said: "Allāh knows, and you know not" (2:216). He chooses for you the highest, the most splendid, the loftiest and the best, while you decline to accept.

Suppose you say: "How can it be right for one sought by the Lord to suffer tribulation, when, according to your classification and

description, trials are meant for the lover, while the loved one is treated with tender care?" Well, our response will be that we have mentioned the general rule first, then spoken secondly of the possible exception. There is no disputing the fact that the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) was chief among the beloved, yet he was the most sorely tried of all men. He said (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "I have felt such fear on Allāh's account as no one else feels; I have been made to suffer such pain on Allāh's account as no one else suffers; I have gone through thirty days and nights when we had no more food than might be hidden under the armpit of Bilāl." He also said (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "We, the company of Prophets, are the people most severely tried, followed by others according to their levels of perfection." He said further (Allāh bless him and give him peace): "I am the one amongst you who knows Allāh best, and who fears Him the most."

How then can the beloved be afflicted and the sought-after favorite be filled with fear? This only happens, as we have pointed out, to ensure the attainment of high stations in Paradise, because it is only through good deeds in this world that stations in Paradise are built and erected. "This world is the seed-bed of the hereafter." The good deeds of the Prophets and saints consist, after the performance of commandments and observance of prohibitions, in patience, contentment and compliance in the midst of tribulation. Then the trial is removed from them, and they experience blessings, favor, lavish affection and reunion for all eternity.

Only Allāh is All-Knowing!

Seventy-second Discourse

On those who are attracted to what they see in the market, and those who view it with patient restraint

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Among those religious and pious people who visit the markets, when they go out to perform duties commanded by Allāh (Exalted is He), such as the Friday prayer or other congregational worship, or to attend to occasional needs, there are several different types:

When one of these types goes into the market, and sees all kinds of pleasures and luxuries there, he is captivated by them, and temptations attach themselves to his heart. This becomes the cause of his downfall, leading him to abandon his religion and his pious conduct and lapse into yielding to his natural impulses and following his passions, unless Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) overtakes him with His mercy and protection and imbues him with the patience to resist, in which case he will be saved.

Another is almost ruined when he sees those things, but he returns to his senses and his religion, controls himself and swallows the bitter pill of having to forgo them. He therefore resembles the warrior who is helped by Allāh (Exalted is He) to overcome his own self, his raw nature and his passions, and for whom He records abundant reward in the hereafter. According to one of the traditions that have come down to us from the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), he said: "When a believer renounces a passionate urge, whether or not he is capable of acting it out, seventy good deeds are recorded to his credit," or words to that effect.

There is another type who obtains those things, uses them and appropriates them, by the gracious favor of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), as his worldly wealth and goods, and gives thanks for them to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

The next type does not see or notice them at all. He is blind to everything apart from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), so he sees no other, and he is deaf to all but Him, so he hears no other. He is too preoccupied to be aware of anything but his beloved and his longing for Him, so he is quite detached from what the world is all about. If you happen to see such a person entering the market, and ask him what he sees in it, he will tell you: "I don't see anything." Yes, of course he does see things, but only with his ordinary eyes, not with the eyes of his heart, and then just with a casual glance, not with a lustful gaze, with a formal, not a meaningful look, a look that is superficial, not profound. So outwardly he does survey the contents of the market, but in his heart he beholds his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), sometimes His Majesty and sometimes His Beauty.

When yet another type enters the market, his heart is filled by Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) with a feeling of compassion for the people there. This compassion for them keeps him too occupied to notice their wares and merchandise. From the moment he enters till the time he leaves, he devotes himself to making supplication, praying for forgiveness and interceding for the people there, with feelings of sympathy and mercy for them. He has tears in his eyes, and his tongue is engaged in praising and extolling Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) for the blessings and favors He has bestowed on them all.

One of this caliber may be called the steward of the cities and the servants of the Lord. If you wish, you may call him an initiate, one of the *Abdāl*, pious and wise, absent from the world and present with the Lord, beloved and sought, a deputy on earth in charge of His servants, an ambassador, an expert and executive, a rightly guided guide, a conductor and director. This is none other than the philosopher's stone and the magpie's egg. Allāh's good pleasure be upon him, and upon every believer who seeks Allāh and attains the ultimate station.

Seventy-third Discourse

On a party of the saints whom Allāh makes aware of the faults of others

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Allāh (Exalted is He) may sometimes inform His saint about the faults of another, about his lying, his false claims, and his polytheistic association in his deeds, words, thoughts and intentions. Allāh's saint then jealously defends His Lord, His Prophet and His religion, as his anger intensifies inwardly and then outwardly, whether the offender is present or absent. How can he lay claim to fitness, with so many sicknesses and ailments, internal and external? How can he claim to profess Oneness while associating others with the Lord? Such association amounts to unbelief and remoteness from the presence of Allāh, for it is an attribute of the enemy, of Satan the accursed, and of the hypocrites who are doomed to the lowest pit of hell-fire, where they must abide forever.

Thus the tongue of the saint is moved to speak out about the person's faults, his wicked deeds, the insolence of his extravagant pretensions to the states of the champions of truth, and his emulating those who experience annihilation in the decree and action of Allāh and who are sought by Him. This may come as an expression of zeal for Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), sometimes as a form of rebuke and reprimand for the offender, or then again as an outburst inspired by the action and will of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and the force of His wrath at the falsehood.

The sin of backbiting may now be imputed to the saint of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). It may be asked whether a saint is allowed to backbite, when he forbids others to do so, or if he may tell all and sundry about things that are not public knowledge among all classes of society. Well, the criticism is deserved by those who make it, as Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has said: "The

sin in them is greater than their usefulness" (2:219). On the surface, it is censure of something reprehensible, but inwardly it is a provocation of the Lord's displeasure and a protest against Him.

One who raises such objections must be in a state of confusion, so duty requires that he keep silent, submit, and try to find the justification for it in the sacred law—permission, not opposition. The Lord and His saint are both attacking his fabrications and lies, and this may give him cause to eradicate his faults, repent, and find his way back from his ignorance and confusion. While the process is repugnant to the saint, it is beneficial to the deluded creature whose vanity and folly have brought him to the brink of ruin.

Allāh guides whom He will to a Way that is straight. (24:46)

Seventy-fourth Discourse

*On how the intelligent person should prove to himself the
Uniqueness of Allāh*

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

The first thing an intelligent person should contemplate is the nature and structure of his own being, and then all the phenomena of the created universe. From this he should infer the existence of their Creator and Inventor, because in the work there is evidence of the Maker, and in the masterful power there is an indication of the wise Master, for all things owe their existence to Him.

Such is the import of the comments made by Ibn 'Abbās (may Allāh be well pleased with him and his father) in explanation of His words (Exalted is He): "And He has made subservient to you what is in the heavens and what is in the earth, all together, from Him" (45:13). What he said was this: "In everything there is one of His names, and the name of each thing comes from that name of His, so you are right in the midst of His names, His attributes and His actions, inwardly through His power and outwardly through His wisdom. He is manifest in His attributes and concealed in His essence. He veils the essence with the attributes, and veils the attributes with the actions. He reveals knowledge through the will, and manifests the will through movements. He conceals the design and the process, and manifests the work through the will, so He is hidden in His invisibility and manifest in His wisdom and power. 'There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing' (42:11)."

In this statement he has revealed such secrets of inner understanding as are only displayed from a "niche wherein there is a lamp." This was the man for whom sinless hands were raised with the prayer: "O Allāh, instruct him in religion and teach him the art of interpretation!"

May Allāh (Exalted is He) bestow on us the blessings granted to to such people, and gather us to share their company and their holiness. Āmīn.

Seventy-fifth Discourse

On spiritual culture [taṣawwuf] and what it is based on

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

I advise you to be dutiful and obedient to Allāh, to maintain the outer observance of the sacred law and the integrity of your inner feeling, to be generous of soul and cheerful of countenance, to spend freely on charity, to prevent suffering, and to endure pain and poverty. Respect the dignity of the elders, and maintain friendly relations with the brethren. Offer good counsel to young and old, give up controversy, and be sympathetic. Always put others before yourself, and never be a miser. Stop keeping company with those who do not share our interest in the spiritual life. Be ready to help in matters religious and worldly.

The real meaning of poverty is not depending for your needs on people like yourself, while the real meaning of affluence is being able to do without people like yourself.

Spiritual culture *[taṣawwuf]* is not acquired through long palaver but through going hungry and giving up things that are familiar and pleasant. The initiation of the spiritual pauper (*fugara'*) is not through knowledge, but through friendliness, for knowledge disturbs him, while friendliness puts him at his ease. *Tasawwuf* is based on eight qualities:

1. Generosity like that of our master Abraham (on him be peace);
2. Cheerful resignation like that of Isaac (on him be peace);
3. Patience like that of Job (on him be peace);
4. Symbolic expression like that of Zachariah (on him be peace);
5. Exile like that of John (on him be peace);
6. Wearing simple wool clothing like Moses (on him be peace);

7. Wandering like Jesus (on him be peace); and
8. Poverty like that of our Prophet Muḥammad (Allāh bless him, his brother Prophets and Messengers, and the family and companions of each one, and grant peace to them all).

Seventy-sixth Discourse

On advice

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

I advise you to relate to the rich with dignity and to the poor with humility. You must practice humility and sincerity, which means constant contemplation of the Creator. Do not distrust Allāh in worldly matters, but humbly submit to Him on all occasions. Do not violate your brother's right on the strength of the friendship that exists between you. In the company of spiritual paupers you should behave with modesty, good manners and generosity. Mortify yourself, so that you may come to life. The people nearest to Allāh (Exalted is He) are those with the best moral character. The best of deeds is keeping one's innermost being from any inclination toward that which is apart from Allāh (Exalted is He). You must be truthful and patient.

Two things should suffice you in this world: the companionship of a spiritual pauper, and service to a saint. Such a pauper is one who feels no need of anything except Allāh (Exalted is He).

Aggressiveness toward someone beneath you is weakness, toward someone above you is arrogant pride, and toward someone like yourself is bad manners.

Spiritual poverty and *taṣawwuf* are serious business, so do not mix them with anything frivolous. May Allāh help us, and you and all the Muslims to achieve success. Āmīn.

O *Wāli*, it is your duty to remember Allāh in every circumstance, because this brings all that is good together. You must cling to the lifeline of Allāh, because it wards off harm and injury. You must be prepared to meet the events decreed by destiny, because they are bound to happen. Know that you will be held responsible for how you behave in action and at rest, so attend to what is most appropriate at the moment. and beware of redundant physical activities.

It is your duty to obey Allāh and His Messenger and those who continue his work. Give them their due, and do not importune them for what is due from them. Offer prayers of supplication on every occasion.

It is your duty to think well of the Muslims and to relate to them with good intentions. Work hard to secure their general welfare. Do not end your day with bad feeling, rancor or hatred for anyone still in your heart. Pray for those who have wronged you, and fear Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). You must eat only lawful food, and ask people versed in knowledge of Allāh about things you do not know.

It is also your duty to feel shame before Allāh (Glorified and Exalted is He). Let your companionship be with Allāh, and befriend others besides Allāh only within the scope of His companionship.

Give in charity every morning from your bread, and in the evening perform the funeral prayer for the Muslims who have died that day. Follow your post-sunset prayer with the prayer for special guidance and blessing [*salāt al-istikbāra*]. In the early morning and late evening you should repeat seven times: "O Allāh, protect us from the Fire." Make a practice of saying: "I take refuge with Allāh, the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing, from Satan the accursed," then reciting:

He is Allāh, than Whom there is no other god, the Knower of the Unseen and the Visible. He is the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate... (59:22)

to the end of that chapter of the Qur'ān (*Sūratu'l-Hashr*).

Allāh is the only guide to success, the only helper, for there is no might and no strength except with Allāh, the High, the Great!

Seventy-seventh Discourse

On staying with Allāh and becoming extinct to creatures

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

Be with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) as if there were no creatures, and with creatures as if there were no self. For when you are with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) in the absence of creatures, you will find Him and become extinct to all else, and when you are with creatures in the absence of self, you will always act justly and be safe from bad consequences. Leave everything at the door of your retreat and enter it alone, then you will see your intimate friend in your solitude with the eye of your innermost being, and will witness what lies behind the visible realm. The self will disappear, to be replaced by the command of Allāh and His nearness. Now your ignorance is knowledge, your distance is nearness, your silence is remembrance, and your loneliness is intimate friendship.

O you here! There is nothing except creation and Creator, so if you opt for the Creator, say to the rest:

They are enemies to me, except the Lord of the Worlds. (26:77)

Then the Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) went on to say:

He who has tasted, knows.

He was asked: "When someone is mainly accustomed to the bitterness of his gall, how can he discover the taste of sweetness?" He replied: "He must set himself to work on his desires with conscious effort. O you here! When the believer does a good deed, his self (*nafs*) is transformed into a heart (*qalb*), and attains the consciousness of a heart. Then his heart is transformed into a secret soul (*sirr*), which is then transformed through annihilation to achieve

real being (*wujūd*) and perpetuity."

Then the Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

To loved ones every door is open wide. O you here! Annihilation (*fana*) is the obliteration of all natural characteristics, and the transformation of your nature into the nature of the angels, then becoming extinct to the nature of the angels, then getting back onto the first track. Then your Lord will water you as He sees fit, and sow in you what He sees fit. If you wish for this, you must practice Islām and then obedient submission (*istislām*), then acquire knowledge of Allāh, then inner understanding, then real being. When your being belongs to Him, you will be His entirely. Renunciation is an hour's work, piety is two hours' work, and inner understanding is work for all eternity.

Seventy-eighth Discourse

*On the people devoted to spiritual struggle and self-examination
and the masters of resolve; explanation of their virtues*

The Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment) said:

There are ten virtues to be practiced by those engaged in spiritual struggle and self-examination. If they keep them up and master them by Allāh's leave (Exalted is He), they will attain to noble stations.

1. The servant should not swear by Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), whether truthfully or falsely, deliberately or absentmindedly. If he exercises this kind of self-control and trains his tongue accordingly, it will bring him to the point where he can give up swearing altogether, with or without premeditation. Once he has become accustomed to this, Allāh will open a door to His lights letting him experience the benefit thereof in his heart, and raising him in rank and strength, in his resolve and his patience, in the approbation of his brethren and the esteem of his neighbors, so that all who know him will regard him as a good example, and everyone who sees him will hold him in awe.

2. He should avoid lying, whether in jest or in earnest. If he practices this self-control and his tongue gets used to being restrained, Allāh (Exalted is He) will thereupon expand his feelings and purify his mind. It will be as if he had no knowledge of lying, and when he hears it from another he will reproach and rebuke him for it within himself. If he prays for the person to be rid of it, there will be a reward for him.

3. He should beware of promising something to someone and then failing to keep his promise. He would do better to stop making promises altogether, so as to gain strength for his task and to keep his sense of purpose, since breach of promise is tantamount to lying.

If he acts on this advice, the Lord will open to him the door of liberality and the degree of modesty, and he will be granted love among the truthful and higher esteem in the sight of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

4. He should avoid cursing anything in the realm of creation, or hurting anything from a mere atom upward. This is one of the moral standards of the pious and the champions of truth. It yields a good result for one who observes it, in that he enjoys Allāh's protection in this world, along with the spiritual degrees He has in store for him, and He delivers him from the pitfalls of perdition, keeps him safe from people, blesses him with human compassion, and brings him near to Himself (Almighty and Glorious is He).

5. He should avoid invoking evil on any fellow creature, even one who has wronged him. He should not cut him with his tongue, nor retaliate against him by word or deed. This virtue raises one who practices it to the highest ranks. If he cultivates it, he will achieve noble status in this world and the hereafter, love and affection in the hearts of all creatures near and far, answers to his prayers, popular acclaim, and respect in this world in the hearts of all believers.

6. He should not assert that he has evidence of polytheism, unbelief or hypocrisy on the part of any member of the Muslim community ["people of the Qibla"]. This is closer to mercy and higher in degree, since it is perfectly in keeping with the Sunna, very far from intruding on Allāh's knowledge and from incurring Allāh's wrath, and nearer to the good pleasure and mercy of Allāh (Exalted is He). This is an honorable and noble doorway to Allāh (Exalted is He), through which the servant is endowed with mercy for all creatures.

7. He should refrain from contemplating sinful offences, and restrain all his limbs and organs from participating in them. Such efforts bring the quickest reward to heart and body in the present life of this world, as well as the good things Allāh holds in store in the

hereafter. We beg Allāh to bless us all, to educate us in these virtues, and to remove our base desires from our hearts.

8. He should avoid laying a burden of his, big or small, on any fellow creature. Rather should he relieve all creatures of his burden, regardless of what he needs or does not need, for this is the height of honor for servants and of nobility for the righteous. From this he gains strength to fulfill his duty to enjoin what is good and fair and forbid what is evil and unfair. All creatures should be of equal status as far as he is concerned. When this stage is reached, Allāh moves him on toward annihilation (*fanā*), certitude, and confidence in Him (Almighty and Glorious is He). No other is raised to the same height, yet he sees all creatures as having equal rights. This is quite certainly the cause of honor for the believers and of nobility for the righteous, and it is very close to the gate of sincerity.

9. He must stop expecting human beings to satisfy his greed, and not let himself covet what they have at their disposal. Thus he will achieve the greatest honor, peculiar enrichment, vast dominion, splendid glory, pure certitude, and frank, unequivocal trust in the Lord. This is one of the doors to confidence in Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), one of the doors to renunciation, leading to the attainment of piety and the perfect practice of religion. It is one of the marks of those who are wholly dedicated to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He).

10. The tenth is humility, for it is with this virtue that the servant's residence is erected, that his station is raised high, that his honor and eminence are made perfect in the sight of Allāh (Glory be to Him) and in the sight of His creatures, and that he is empowered to achieve all his worldly and otherworldly goals. This virtue is the root, branch and consummation of all virtues, whereby the servant attains to the stations of the righteous, those who are content with Allāh (Exalted is He) in joy and in sorrow alike. This is the perfection of piety.

Humility means that the servant never meets anyone without



assuming him to be more worthy than himself. He will always say: "Perhaps he is better than I in Allāh's sight, and higher in degree." If it is someone young, he will say: "This person has not offended Allāh (Exalted is He) as I have done, so he is undoubtedly better than I." If it is someone older, he will say: "This person served Allāh long before I did." If it is someone learned, he will say: "This person has received something I have not experienced, and has acquired something I have not acquired. He knows things of which I am ignorant, and he puts his knowledge into practice." If it is someone who is ignorant, he will say: "This person has offended Allāh in ignorance, while I have offended him knowingly. I do not know what end He has in store for mē, nor what end He has in store for him." If it should be an unbeliever, he will say: "I don't know; perhaps he will embrace Islām and come to a good end, and maybe I shall become an unbeliever and come to a bad end."

This is the topic of sympathy [for others] and apprehension [about oneself], the first to become familiar and the last to remain with servants of the Lord. When the servant is like this, Allāh (Exalted is He) keeps him safe from disasters, and brings him as a reward to the stations of loyalty to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). He then belongs among the chosen ones and friends of the All-Merciful, and among the enemies of Iblis, Allāh's accursed foe.

This is the gate of mercy, with the attainment of which the gate of pride is demolished and the cords of vanity are severed, and the stage of self-aggrandizement in religious and worldly matters is left behind. This is the very marrow of worshipful service, the ultimate distinction of the self-denying, and the mark of the devout. There is nothing more admirable than this.

The servant should now prevent his tongue from discussing human beings and matters of no importance, otherwise he will accomplish nothing. Malice, pride and spite must leave his heart wherever he finds himself, his tongue should be the same in private as in public, his private and public wishes should be identical, and

so should his words. All people should be as one to him in respect of sincere advice. He should not be one of those counselors who speak ill of one of Allāh's creatures, or condemn him for some action, nor should it please him to be told of someone's faults. This vice is the bane of Allāh's servants, the ruin of the devout and the destruction of the pious, except for those whom Allāh (Exalted is He) helps by keeping them safe in tongue and heart through His mercy, His grace and His beneficence.



Addendum

The Shaikh's final advice to his sons (sanctified be their innermost secrets); some valuable remarks he made; his last illness and death (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment.)

When the Shaikh (may Allāh be content with him and grant him contentment) was in the throes of the illness of which he died, his son 'Abd al-Wahhāb (sanctified be his innermost secret) said to him: "O my master, leave me with some advice to put into practice after you are gone." To this he replied (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment): "You must observe your duty to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), fear no one but Allāh, pin your hopes on no one but Allāh, and entrust all your needs to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). Do not rely on anyone but Him, address all your requests to Him (Exalted is He), and put your trust in no one other than Allāh (Glory be to Him). Affirm His Oneness. All is contained within the affirmation of His Oneness."

He also said (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment): "When the heart is as it should be with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), it wants for nothing and contains nothing superfluous."

He said further (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment): "I am a kernel with no shell."

To his sons he said (may Allāh be well pleased with him): "Keep your distance from me, for I am with you outwardly, but inwardly I am with others."

He also said (may Allāh be well pleased with him): "Others have come into my presence, so make room for them and treat them courteously. A very great kindness here. Do not crowd their space."

He kept saying (may Allāh be well pleased with him): "On you be peace, and Allāh's mercy and His blessings. May Allāh forgive me and you. May Allāh relent toward me and toward you. In the Name of Allāh, farewell!" He said this for a day and a night.

He said (may Allāh be well pleased with him): "Woe unto you!

Nothing worries me, not the angel, not even you, O angel of death! He who cares for us has blessed us with something beyond you." Then he uttered a loud cry. This was on the day in the late evening of which he died (may Allāh be well pleased with him). It is reported by two of his sons, Shaikh 'Abd al-Razzāq and Shaikh Mūsā (sanctified be their innermost secrets) that the venerable *Ghawth* (may Allāh be well pleased with him) would raise his hands and stretch them out, while saying: "On you be peace, and Allāh's mercy and His blessings! Repent and get into line when it comes to your turn."

He was sayng (may Allāh be well pleased with him): "Wait!" Then came to him the moment of truth and the pang of death.

He said (may Allāh be well pleased with him): "Between me and you and all other creatures there is a distance like that between heaven and earth, so do not compare me to anyone, and do not compare us with anyone." Then his son Shaikh 'Abd al-'Azī (sanctified be his innermost secret) asked him again about his suffering and how he felt, but he said (may Allāh be well pleased with him): "Let no one ask me anything. I am basking in the knowledge of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He)."

Shaikh 'Abd al-'Azīz (sanctified be his innermost secret) asked him again about his illness, and he replied (may Allāh be well pleased with him): "No one knows the nature of my sickness, and nobody understands it, be he human, jinn, or angel. Allāh's knowledge is not diminished by Allāh's decree. The decree may change, but the knowledge is unchanging. 'Allāh effaces or confirms whatever He will, and with Him is the Essence of the Book,' (13:39). 'He will not be questioned as to what He does, but they will be questioned.' (21:23)."

The following descriptions have also been reported:

His son Shaikh 'Abd al-Jabbār (sanctified be his innermost secret) asked him: "Which part of your body gives you pain?" He replied (may Allāh be well pleased with him): "All my organs are

hurting me except my heart. There is no pain there, for it is with Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He)." Then death came to him, as he was saying (may Allāh be well pleased with him): "I seek help in the words: 'There is none worthy of worship but Allāh, Glorified and Exalted is He, the Ever-Living, Who has no fear of passing away. Glory be to Him Who exults in His omnipotence, and subdues His servants with death. There is none worthy of worship but Allāh. Muhammad is Allāh's Messenger.'"

His son Shaikh Mūsā (sanctified be his innermost secret) told us that when death approached the presence of the Shaikh (may Allāh be well pleased with him, and grant him contentment), he was trying to say the word "*ta'azzaza*" ["exults"], but could not get the pronunciation right, so he kept on repeating "*ta-'az-za-za*," slowly and emphatically, until his tongue shot it out. Then he said: "Allāh, Allāh, Allāh," till his voice grew faint and his tongue was cleaving to the roof of his mouth. Then his noble spirit went forth.

The good pleasure of Allāh (Exalted is He) be upon him!

About the Translator

Muhtar Holland was born in 1935, in the ancient city of Durham in the North East of England. This statement may be considered anachronistic, however, since he did not bear the name Muhtar until 1969, when he was moved—by powerful experiences in the *latihan kejiwaan* of Subud—to embrace the religion of Islām.*

At the age of four, according to an entry in his father's diary, he said to a man who asked his name: "I'm a stranger to myself." During his years at school, he was drawn most strongly to the study of languages, which seemed to offer signposts to guide the stranger on his "Journey Home," apart from their practical usefulness to one who loved to spend his vacations traveling—at first on a bicycle—through foreign lands. Serious courses in Latin, Greek, French, Spanish and Danish, with additional smatterings of Anglo-Saxon, Italian, German and Dutch. Travels in France, Germany, Belgium, Holland and Denmark. Then a State Scholarship and up to Balliol College, Oxford, for a degree course centered on the study of Arabic and Turkish. Travels in Turkey and Syria. Then National Service in the Royal Navy, with most of the two years spent on an intensive course in the Russian language.

In the years since graduation from Oxford and Her Majesty's Senior Service, Mr. Holland has held academic posts at the University of Toronto, Canada; at the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London, England (with a five-month leave to study Islamic Law in Cairo, Egypt); and at the Universiti Kebangsaan in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (followed by a six-month sojourn in Indonesia). He also worked as Senior Research Fellow at the Islamic Foundation in Leicester, England, and as Director of the Nūr al-Islām Translation Center in Valley Cottage, New York.

* The name Muhtar was received at that time from Bapak Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, of Wisma Subud, Jakarta, in response to a request for a suitable Muslim name. In strict academic transliteration from the Arabic, the spelling would be *Mukhīr*. The form *Muchtar* is probably more common in Indonesia than *Muhtar*, which happens to coincide with the modern Turkish spelling of the name.

His freelance activities have mostly been devoted to writing and translating in various parts of the world, including Scotland and California. He made his Pilgrimage (*Hajj*) to Mecca in 1980. Published works include the following:

al-Ghazālī. *On the Duties of Brotherhood*. Translated from the Classical Arabic by Muhtar Holland. London: Latimer New Dimensions, 1975. New York: Overlook Press, 1977. Repr. 1980.

Sheikh Muzaffer Ozak al-Jerrahi. *The Unveiling of Love*. Translated from the Turkish by Muhtar Holland. New York: Inner Traditions, 1981.

Ibn Taymiya. *Public Duties in Islām*. Translated from the Arabic by Muhtar Holland. Leicester, England: Islamic Foundation, 1982.

Hasan Shushud. *Masters of Wisdom of Central Asia*. Translated from the Turkish by Muhtar Holland. Ellingstring, England: Coombe Springs Press, 1983.

al-Ghazālī. *Inner Dimensions of Islamic Worship*. Translated from the Arabic by Muhtar Holland. Leicester, England: Islamic Foundation, 1983.

Sheikh Muzaffer Ozak al-Jerrahi. *Irshād*. Translated [from the Turkish] with an Introduction by Muhtar Holland. Warwick, New York: Amity House, 1988.